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& CONSUMER ELECTRONICS

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In Plain English

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Master Your Browser



*Customize & Troubleshoot
Your Window To The Web*

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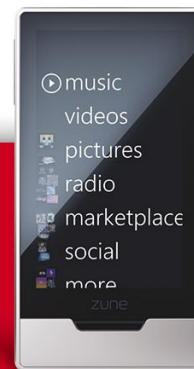
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Master Your Browser



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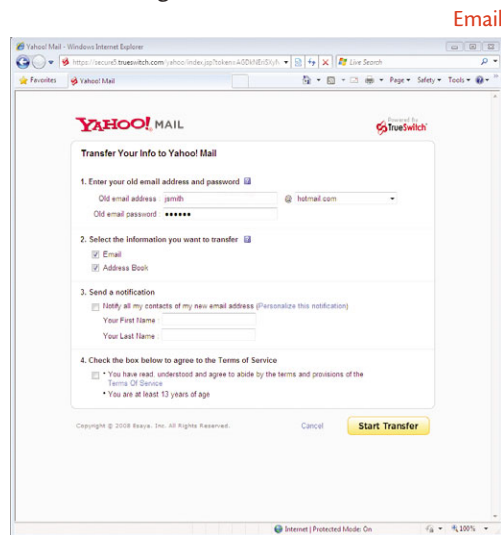
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Email

Editor's Note

When it comes to the things we own, personalization is the name of the game. Our towels and golf bags have monograms. Our cars have bumper stickers, and our SUVs have tiny sticker-portraits of our family members. We find ways to inject a little (and sometimes a lot) of our personalities into our clothing, our homes, and everything else we value.

Not surprisingly, that need for personalization spills into our electronics, too. First, we buy gadgets that fit our personality. Then, we get busy finding ways to customize them. Our phones, for example, don't ring any more. Instead, they play clips from songs that remind us of the person who is calling. We engrave our names into the backs of our iPods.

We do this with software, too. We put pictures of family on our phone and PC backgrounds. We tweak Windows until it behaves exactly (well, almost exactly) the way we want it to. We change settings in our favorite applications, and we spend countless hours customizing our Facebook pages.

Weirdly, though, many of us pretty much ignore our browsers. I often help friends and family fix their PCs, so I've seen many copies of Internet Explorer and Firefox as well as some of the lesser-known browsers. In almost every case, the user hasn't added many bookmarks (let alone organized them), installed add-ons or toolbars, or changed security settings.

I guess I shouldn't be so surprised. We often refer to the browser as a "window to the Web" because the user looks through it to see Web pages online. It's easy to ignore those features that are on the window itself.

This issue is your chance to get better acquainted with your browser. We'll show you everything you need to know about bookmarking Web pages, cleaning out unwanted Internet files, and installing add-ons that give your browser the functionality you want. It's time to make your browser your own.

Joshua B. Gulick

Joshua Gulick

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DESKTOPS & LAPTOPS

OCZ Delivers A Do-It-Yourself Netbook

Today's advanced PC technology has made building desktop systems easier than ever, thanks to plug-and-play components that simply work correctly and without hassle when assembled. But while desktop builds have grown more user-friendly, the already-precarious environments of laptops have become even more so as manufacturers continue to shrink these devices to ever-smaller footprints. Cracking the case of a notebook reveals intricately placed components that are difficult to re-assemble once taken apart.

With this in mind, the idea of a do-it-yourself netbook (let alone a full-sized notebook) might sound absurd to some. But that's precisely what OCZ Technology offers with its Neutrino (\$312.99; www.ocztechnology.com), a 10-inch bare-bones netbook that lets customers make—and install—their own choices for several of the components.

According to the company, customers can save money by using components that aren't marked up and installed by technicians. However, the retail price of the Neutrino already matches the prices of some fully equipped netbooks. On the other hand, you'll have the power in your hands to create your netbook (or at least certain parts of it) almost exactly as you prefer.

Like bare-bones desktop systems, the Neutrino comes with a processor, motherboard, and



If you have some spare laptop or netbook components, OCZ's Neutrino provides a clean slate upon which you can build your own netbook, or at least certain parts of it.

case as well as a display. Included are an Intel Atom N270 1.6GHz processor, a 10-inch 1,024 x 600 resolution display with an LED (light-emitting diode) backlight, integrated Intel 945GSE graphics, one PCI-E (Peripheral Component Interconnect Express) slot, two 1.5-watt speakers, an integrated micro pad, 83-key keyboard, one VGA (Video Graphics Array) port, one RJ-45 port, two USB 2.0 ports, one DC-in jack, and a headphone jack. Also included are a 4-cell battery and removable smart battery pack, built-in 1.3MP (megapixel) digital video camera with microphone, and integrated 802.11b/g wireless.

The rest is up to you. This netbook has room for up to 2GB of DDR2-667 memory (in one SODIMM

[Small Outline Dual In-line Memory Module] socket), up to a 250GB solid-state drive or hard drive, a 4-in-1 card reader, and a mini card. You're also responsible for the operating system, which could be a big chunk of change if you select a Windows OS, but keep in mind that netbooks make nice homes for user-friendly Linux options, such as Ubuntu.

If you have a spare 2.5-inch hard drive or even some spare compatible memory, this DIY netbook could be an attractive project for the home computer builder. But for those who need to buy the missing components, the Neutrino likely will appeal only to users who are particular about the storage options in their netbook and have the spare cash to fulfill their needs. ■

STORAGE

Flexible Memory Rears Its Head

We've heard about advances in flexible display technology, but if you think about a flexible display, wouldn't the brains behind that display also need to be flexible? We think so, and evidently researchers are well ahead of the curve in this area.

Engineers at the NIST (National Institute of Standards and Technology) created a method for building flexible memory that could be used for portable devices. The research involves the use of polymer sheets (similar to overhead transparencies), upon which the engineers apply a thin film of titanium dioxide (a substance found in sunscreen). From



there, electrical contacts are added to create a flexible memory switch that requires less than 10 volts to operate.

The research team used an inexpensive method for applying the titanium dioxide that could help to keep down the overall costs of flexible memory, which already uses inexpensive materials. According to the NIST, the memory can withstand more than 4,000 flexes and can retain data when power is lost. The latter trait makes this flexible memory similar to a memristor, an element created last year that's expected to result in more energy-efficient systems in the future. ■

DISPLAYS

Digital Frames Sized For Any Mantle

If you want to show off your digital pictures, what better place to do so than your mantle? That's possible with ViewSonic's (www.viewsonic.com) line of TrueView digital photo frames, which are designed to provide clear picture quality and plenty of flexibility.

Available in sizes of 10.4, 8, and 7 inches, the frames all have a 4:3 aspect ratio and include 800 x 600 LCD panels with a contrast ratio of 500:1 and brightness of 250 cd/m2. Further, the frames include an impressive 2GB of internal memory, allowing storage of thousands of pictures. A built-in card reader supports SD (Secure Digital), MMC (MultiMediaCard), and MS (Memory Stick) memory formats for easy photo transfer, or users can opt to use the included USB 2.0 port for direct transfer.

With the slideshow feature, pictures can be rotated with various speeds and transitional effects. An included remote control allows quick access to specific photos or groups of photos through on-screen menus. Users can opt to display calendar or clock functions along with their pictures, which

help the frames serve a dual purpose in office environments. Retail prices for the frames start at around \$75. ■



The TrueView line of digital photo frames from ViewSonic blends form and function, giving users the power to display thousands of pictures on their mantle while keeping style intact.

PRINTERS & PERIPHERALS

The Power Of Input Is In The Loop

Owners of HTPCs (home-theater PCs) generally strive to integrate their computers into their entertainment systems in an unobtrusive manner. While that might be feasible for the PC itself—which can be hidden away in a console—it's not always so feasible for the input devices. After all, although a wireless mouse might look sleek, the user still must place it on a flat surface to communicate with the PC.

Not so with the Loop (\$99; www.hillcrestlabs.com), an in-air mouse from Hillcrest Labs that's shaped like, well, a loop, allowing the user to sit back with the Loop in hand to control on-screen media. The Loop uses an RF (radio frequency) transceiver that plugs into a USB port to provide a wireless connection across large rooms or through closed cabinet doors.

Four buttons on the Loop control mouse power, left and right navigation, and the ability to hide or show the cursor or freeze it in place. The Loop also has a status LED and another light further down the device that illuminates when a button is pressed. To move the cursor on the screen, the user simply needs to aim the Loop at the display and move the device in the air. ■



Designed for use with PCs in home media setups, the Loop operates as an in-air mouse to facilitate on-screen cursor movement and provide control over entertainment media.

CPUs, CHIPS & CARDS

AMD Slices Transcoding Times With Stream Technology

As the popularity of HD (high-definition) media continues to soar, chip manufacturers continue to seek improved methods for handling that content. One of the biggest bottlenecks occurs during video transcoding, particularly when converting an HD file to a mobile format.

Such tasks historically required a great deal of CPU power, but AMD has revealed a strategy for moving much of that work to graphics cards, which in turn can significantly speed up transcoding times. AMD is using ATI Stream technology to meld the work of CPUs and GPUs to create faster overall processing times for graphics-related tasks.



For example, in AMD tests, a 94-second MPEG-2 (Moving Picture Experts Group-2) HD file took 85 seconds to convert to an iPod Classic format using only the CPU, while ATI Stream (using an ATI Radeon HD 4670 graphics card) took only 27 seconds. The results were similarly dramatic when converting similar files for iPhone, PlayStation Portable, and PlayStation 3 formats.

AMD offers this ability through its latest graphics drivers, which include a free update of AMD's ATI Video Converter utility. If you have an ATI graphics card, you can download the drivers from ati.amd.com/support. ■

DIGITAL MISCELLANEA

Online Business Presence Made Easy

Unlike large, well-funded enterprises, small companies don't always have the resources to create a slick, professional-looking Web site that accurately reflects their businesses. But now there's a solution, thanks to 1&1 Internet.

The 1&1 MyBusiness Site (www.1and1.com) offers predesigned Web templates for more than 100 business types, including restaurants, retail shops, equipment stores, service providers, and many others. For \$9.99 per month, businesses can host that template on 1&1's servers with unlimited pages, Web space, and traffic. Further, they'll receive a free domain name, email address, and free 24/7 customer support.

Other Web hosting companies offer similar packages aimed at businesses, but 1&1 is working to stand out through a focus on simplicity. "1&1 MyBusiness Site puts an end to complex feature lists, which are usually associated with Web hosting products," says CEO Oliver Mauss. "Our research found that the endless feature lists are tiresome and confusing for a lot of

business owners. . . . A small company should not have to worry about such technical details."

The company offers a free, five-day test drive during which businesses can launch fully featured Web sites online. If they decide to purchase the product, the monthly fee is the only cost they'll incur, as there are no setup fees or minimum contract terms. **I**



The 1&1 MyBusiness Site offers predesigned Web templates for more than 100 business types, including restaurants, retail shops, equipment stores, service providers, and many others.

PROBLEM-SOLVER: TROUBLESHOOTING THE NEWS

Windows hangs when I install it on my new hard drive.

Although newer versions of Windows are designed to accommodate SATA (Serial Advanced Technology Attachment) drives, the installation process still occasionally causes problems for some users. If Windows hangs when you install it on a SATA drive, use another computer to download SATA drivers provided by your motherboard manufacturer (Intel also provides standard drivers). You'll need to extract them to a floppy diskette or USB drive and insert the floppy (or drive) during the installation process.

My LCD monitor's brightness is turned all the way down, but it's still too bright.

The brightness factor differs among many LCD models, and in some cases, LCD brightness doesn't seem to go low enough. If this describes your monitor, try also turning down the contrast. Also, you might be able to tweak brightness settings through the driver software provided with your graphics card.

My wireless mouse works only for a few minutes after I boot my PC.

If you've ruled out battery-related problems, check your Windows power settings. In Windows Vista, click Start, Control Panel, System And Maintenance, and Power Options. Click Change Plan Settings and click Change Advanced Power

Settings. Click the plus signs (+) to expand USB Settings and USB Selective Suspend Setting. Choose Disabled on the drop-down menu, click Apply, and close the control panel windows.

Something inside of my PC case is chirping. Is this normal?

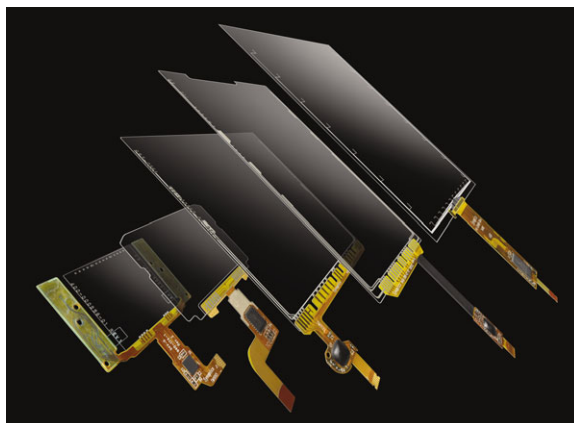
Although chirping or squeaking noises aren't normal, they're not necessarily harmful, either. Certain motherboard models are notorious for emitting such noises, and when it happens, there's not much you can do to prevent them. Otherwise, make sure your hard drives are securely fastened. Also, installing rubber feet on the bottom of your PC case can sometimes help to reduce noise. **I**

Cracking The Crystal Ball Of Mobile Interfaces

All the flash and fanciness of smartphones don't mean much if the devices are difficult to use. However, finding the perfect mix of form and function is a constant challenge for manufacturers of mobile devices, who must perpetually find ways to make increasingly smaller devices comfortable and easy to use. One of the innovators in this realm is Synaptics, which is working to create alternatives to traditional input methods found in today's devices.

"The popularity of touchscreens in mobile and smartphones is driving the broad adoption of capacitive sensing technology, which is more durable than resistive sensors," explains Philip Sieh, field applications engineer with Synaptics (www.synaptics.com). "This demand has required touchscreen suppliers to take a two-pronged approach to address the full market range—to provide high-performance and cost-effective touchscreen solutions for high-end and feature-rich phones and to provide lower-cost alternative interface solutions for the rest of the mobile phone market."

However, Sieh notes that current mechanical solutions, such as trackballs and navigational keys, are



Synaptics is working to change the landscape of mobile touchpads by integrating touch surfaces under dial keypads that support 360-degree pointing and gesture abilities.

susceptible to reliability issues as phone owners subject their devices to normal wear and tear. Further, they can restrict the user's freedom to efficiently navigate through content. One of Synaptics' recent innovations is an alternative to trackballs and five-way navigational switches called FlexPad, which implements a full-functioning touch surface under the dial keypad while enabling 360-degree pointing and gesture abilities such as flick and pinch.

Synaptics also has a keen eye on the future of interface technologies for smartphones and other mobile devices. For example, Sieh predicts that interfaces will converge to a "human

interaction processor" that not only connects to the basic touch sensor in devices but also to several information collection sensors. These sensors would absorb information from multiple systems and report real-time information on how the user is interacting with the phone.

"Synaptics also foresees grip recognition, meaning that touch buttons, which are simply touch sensors, can be placed around a device to tell the system how the user is holding the device and change the interface accordingly," Sieh says. "For example, if a left-

handed person is using a device, the controls could shift to better suit the left hand. Likewise, if someone is using the device with both hands, or in portrait vs. landscape mode, the controls could adapt."

Sieh also explains that touch buttons could eventually be used for preactivation of mechanical buttons. For example, with proximity sensing, a user could hover his hand or finger over a button to preactivate it, and an audible or visual prompt (such as a voice or illuminated button) would notify the user which button he was about to push. This type of application could prove highly beneficial to blind or visually impaired users, Sieh says. ■

DULY QUOTED

"Before we offer people employment in a public trust position, we have a responsibility to do a thorough background check."

—Chuck Winn, assistant city manager for Bozeman, Mont., explains the city's reasoning behind requiring all job applicants to provide usernames and passwords for Facebook, Google, Yahoo!, YouTube, MySpace, and similar Web sites. The requirement was eventually dropped after worldwide public outcry.

Source: CBSNews.com

News From The Help Desk

Our Most Common Tech Calls

COMPILED BY KRIS GLASER

Each month, we receive numerous technical support calls and email messages. Some computer problems are fairly common, and we find that many callers struggle to resolve the same issues. In this article, we cover some of the most common or timely tech support questions and provide our solution for each of them.

Q I am having trouble with Internet Explorer 7. I want to uninstall and reinstall the program to see if it helps my situation. In Add Or Remove Programs, do I need to uninstall all the updates that are listed before I can uninstall IE7?

A In the Add Or Remove Programs window (in Windows XP, you can navigate there by going to the Control Panel and choosing Add Or Remove Programs in Classic view; in Vista, go to Computer and select Uninstall Or Change A Program from the top menu), you can view the updates that have been made to each program that you have installed by checkmarking the Show Updates box, found at the top of the window. (In Vista, you need to click View Installed Updates to see these.) This option is useful if you need to uninstall updates individually to solve a compatibility issue or other performance issue. But if you want to remove an entire program, such as IE7, Add Or Remove Programs will automatically uninstall any updates that were made to that program. It is not necessary to uninstall each update individually.

To uninstall IE7 in WinXP, simply locate and select it on the list of currently installed programs. On the right, click Remove and follow the instructions to uninstall. You may have to restart your computer when the uninstall is complete. In Vista, IE7 won't show up in the Uninstall Or Change A Program list because it is integrated with the OS. In order to solve issues with the browser, you'll need to reset IE7. Go to the Control Panel, choose the Network And Internet section, and click Internet Options. Under the Advanced tab, click the Reset button under the Reset Internet Explorer Settings area.



Gearbox Computers' Windows KeyFinder PRO software can instantly retrieve your operating system's product key.

Q I want to reinstall my copy of WinXP, but I lost my product key. Is there any way I can retrieve the key?

A Your WinXP product key is usually listed on a sticker found on the disc's case or sleeve. It can also be found in the Windows Registry, but it is encrypted and difficult to find, let alone read. But there are additional ways to retrieve your WinXP product key. The simplest method is to download a key finder program such as Gearbox Computers' Windows Product Key Finder Pro. Key finder programs such as this find and display the CD key to your OS (operating system) and sometimes other Windows and non-Windows products.

To download Windows Key Finder Pro, navigate to www.gearboxcomputers.com. Click the Download tab at the top of the page and scroll down until you find Windows Product Key Finder Pro. Click the Download button and save the file to your hard drive (to make things easy, save the file to your Desktop). Once the download is complete, a key icon will appear on your Desktop. Double-click the icon and select Run. The program will open and immediately list the product key for your operating system in the white window. If you can't retrieve your product key with a key finder program, you can also contact Microsoft for help.

Q Along with the rest of my data, I want to transfer the bookmarks saved in my browser to my new computer. What's the best way to do this?

... it's important when you're
connected to a public network that you
turn off your shared folders.

A Transferring your bookmarks is an easy task. First, you must export your bookmarks to a single file. In Internet Explorer 7, go to File (press ALT if you don't see the File menu) and select Import And Export. When the Import/Export Wizard appears, click Next. Choose Export Favorites from the list of possible actions and choose Next. Then, choose the bookmarks and folders that you want to export. If you want to export all of your bookmarks, simply choose the Favorites folder. Click Next. In the field under Export To A File Or Address, click the Browse button and choose where you want to save your bookmarks. Click Finish. In IE8, click the Favorites button, click the Add Favorites drop-down arrow, and choose Import And Export. When the Import/Export Wizard appears, follow the directions to save your bookmarks to a location of your choosing. In Firefox, go to Bookmarks on the menu bar and choose Organize Bookmarks. Click the Import And Backup button at the top of the window and choose Export HTML. Next, choose where you want to save your bookmarks.

For both Internet Explorer and Firefox, your bookmarks will be saved as bookmarks.htm, by default (you can rename the file if you like). When you open the file, it will open as a Web page with all of your bookmarks listed by folder. If you don't want your bookmarks saved as a Web page, you can copy and paste your list into a word processing document, where the links will work the same.

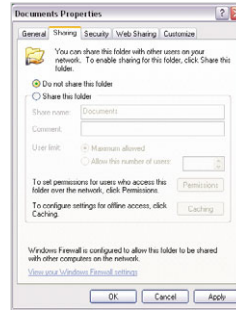
To transfer your bookmarks to another machine, you can save the bookmarks.htm file to a flash drive or attach it to an email and send it to your own inbox, where you can later retrieve it by checking your email on your new computer.

To import your Favorites on another computer with IE7 or IE8, start the Import/Export Wizard and choose Import Favorites from the list of actions. Follow the directions to import your bookmarks from the location that you saved your .htm file and finish the Wizard. To import your bookmarks to Firefox, go to the Bookmarks menu and choose Organize Bookmarks. Click the Import And Backup button and select Import HTML. Click the radio button next to From An HTML File and click Next. Locate your bookmarks file and choose Open.

Q I've heard that it can be dangerous to use my notebook to connect to free public Wi-Fi hotspots at restaurants and coffee shops. How can I protect my computer from viruses and hackers?

A First, use only secure, trustworthy networks offered by the establishment you are visiting. An encrypted network is best. If you're unsure of which network you should connect to, ask an employee to point out their Wi-Fi hotspot.

Be aware of the type of information you are transmitting. Avoid logging in to services that could expose



Turning off shared folders while you're connected to a public network is a good way to help safeguard your private information.

sensitive information, such as your bank or credit card account. Save those tasks for when you are at home or connected to an encrypted network that

you know you can trust.

Next, it's important when you're connected to a public network that you turn off your shared folders. To turn off shared folders in WinXP, navigate to the folder, right-click it, and choose Sharing And Security. Under the Sharing tab, choose Do Not Share This Folder. In Vista, click Start, right-click Network, and choose Properties. In the Sharing And Discovery section, expand the drop-down arrow to the right to select Turn Off File Sharing.

Lastly, you should always utilize a software firewall, such as Windows Firewall, which can help prevent malicious objects from accessing or infecting your computer. You should also install an anti-malware program, such as the free version of AVG (free.avg.com), and scan your computer often to remove any malicious programs that manage to evade your firewall. ■

Feature Package Topics

Each *Smart Computing* issue includes tips, reviews, and information about a variety of topics. However, each issue also has a featured group of articles about a selected topic. Below is a list of the Feature Packages from the previous year. As a *Smart Computing* subscriber, you have access to all of our archived articles at www.smartcomputing.com.

September 2008:	Do It Yourself: Notebook Repair
October 2008:	Boost Your PC's Performance
November 2008:	Reinstall Windows
December 2008:	Holiday Gift Guide
January 2009:	Did You Really Back Up?
February 2009:	Solve Windows Problems
March 2009:	Clean Out Old Software Clutter
April 2009:	Save Money On Your PC
May 2009:	Restore Windows
June 2009:	Upgrade Your Computer
July 2009:	8 PC Emergencies
August 2009:	Stay Safe Online



EuroCom L390T Uno | Pricing begins at \$1,227 | www.eurocom.com

Same Power, Less Space: An All-In-One Desktop

All-in-one desktops, which are PCs with the computer hardware built right into the monitor, are great for people who need to save desk space. Eurocom's L390T Uno is a 19-inch widescreen all-in-one desktop that's fully customizable, including the addition of touch-screen capabilities.

Made To Order

When configuring the L390T Uno, you can choose from the newest Intel dual-core mobile processors, select the storage capacity and system memory, and your operating system. No matter what setup you choose, Eurocom will deliver an energy-efficient PC (74 watts vs.

the typical 300 to 600-watt desktop system), so you'll save money on your energy bill. You can mount the L390T Uno on a wall, using a VESA (Video Electronic Standards Association) bracket, or attach the included stand for desktop placement. Other fun additions include a Web cam, internal TV tuner, 802.11 Wi-Fi, Bluetooth, and a memory card reader.

Benefits

With fewer physical devices and cables on your desk, you'll have more room for PC peripherals, such as a photo printer or your mouse and keyboard. Additionally, the L390T's lightweight, single-unit

design makes the PC easy to move and set up in another room or at a friend's house. The all-in-one offers VGA (Video Graphics Array) and HDMI (High-Definition Multimedia Interface) outputs, so you can use an existing monitor in a dual-monitor setup or connect the PC to an HDTV. There are also five USB 2.0 ports, one eSATA port, and one Express-Card slot.





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Car problems don't care if you have an important business trip or family vacation planned. So what do you do when that dreaded "Check Engine" light comes on just hours before your big trip? Drive straight to the mechanic? Cancel your trip? Maybe it's just a loose gas cap. But what if it's something expensive that will take days to fix? Thanks to the revolutionary CarMD handheld device, now virtually everyone who owns a vehicle can quickly and easily solve automotive repair mysteries — right from home.

How It Works

When your car's "Check Engine" light appears, just plug the CarMD handheld device into your vehicle's Data Link Connector (DLC). The DLC is a small port found right under the dashboard on all 1996 and newer vehicles. It's the same place your mechanic plugs in his expensive diagnostic tools. Not sure where to look? Visit www.CarMD.com to search by year, make and model.

In seconds, CarMD beeps to confirm the test is complete. Then the tool's built-in LEDs let you know how severe the problem is (Green = OK, yellow = possible problem, red = service required). A yellow light can even help you catch a hidden engine problem before you're miles into your next road trip.

To learn more about your car's problem, connect CarMD to your computer using the included software and USB cable. CarMD customers gain free access to an extensive online database (www.carmd.com) that helps diagnose the cause and estimate what repairs should cost down to fair parts and labor in your region. The reports can be used to help do-it-yourselfers with repairs, and give you a bargaining tool with your mechanic.

Stay Green

CarMD can make your car "greener" too. The "Check Engine" light often indicates problems with the emissions system. CarMD can diagnose problems that lower your mileage and pollute the environment.

Why Everyone Needs CarMD

- CarMD works on 1996 and newer cars, light trucks, minivans and SUVs — foreign and domestic. For sale in the U.S. only.
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TMPGEnc® Instant Show Presenter



TMPGEnc Instant Show Presenter | \$49.95 | <http://tmpgenc.pegasys-inc.com/en/tispsc.html>

Turn Photos & Video Into a Show Instantly!

Your son just scored the winning goal in his soccer tournament, and you've got photos and video from your digital camera documenting it all. It's time to celebrate with a victory party! You want to put it all together to make a show, but you don't have time to create and burn a DVD. Your second challenge is to figure out how you are going to show the presentation on your HDTV at the party. Then you realize that the time-consuming task of developing an overall theme and the hours of sorting photos and editing video would take you all weekend to pull it off.

This is why Pegasys developed TMPGEnc Instant Show Presenter with its easy-to-use instant show creation and real-time dual-display features. The robust software takes your digital photos and videos and creates a multimedia slideshow with animated transitions, captions, effects, and music that can be shown on dual display combinations such as your laptop and HDTV.

How To Quickly Create A Dynamic Show

Sit back, relax, and open up TMPGEnc Instant Show Presenter. You are

offered the option of using the Instant Show Wizard that will let you create a show in just a few mouse clicks. Choose from several theme options to set the mood, add your photos, and the wizard will handle the rest by automatically adding thematic music and engaging transition effects!

Now For That Dual Display Challenge

You quickly created a great show, and your weekend is beginning to look brighter. To solve the two-display challenge, you connect your laptop to your HDTV and start the real-time preview that allows you to play a show complete with playback controls and toggles for subtitles, music, and sound effects. With dual display support, you can play the show fullscreen on your HDTV, while controlling the show from your laptop!

Now Everyone Wants A Copy: Burn To A DVD Or Post It On YouTube®

The party was a big success, and everyone wants a copy of the show. You offer to burn the show on a DVD and send everyone a copy. It's easy with the included special edition of TMPGEnc DVD Author 3,

allowing you to create a DVD, complete with menus from the slideshow. You also promise to share the show online with the YouTube® upload feature! Save the show as a Windows Media Video file or MPEG-2 format for mobile devices, DVD, or 1920 x 1080 HDTV playback. Also included is TMPGEnc TileShot Creator, which converts video into a series of pictures, ready to add to your slideshow.

Benefits & Features

- Create a show with just a few clicks
- Real-time presentation with dual display support
- Output as WMV or MPEG-2 video file
- Create a DVD with menus
- Upload to YouTube
- Free limited version also available

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It's possible that as you read this, you have a child or grandchild shuffling off to college where he or she will spend the next eight months or so squeaking out a meager, just-scrapping-by existence due to bank account-emptying tuition fees. Arguably, little has changed about this scenario over the years. What has undoubtedly changed is the manner in which today's college students "get by" vs. students 20 years ago and longer.

Whereas students of yesteryear might have been lucky to have a secondhand TV and AM/FM radio to pass for dorm room entertainment, for example, dorm dwellers today have Internet-connected cell phones, DAPs (digital audio players), Xboxes and other gaming consoles, in-room Internet access for their laptops, and, most likely, a much nicer TV. Though it would be easy to begrudge today's students for such luxuries, the old adage of wanting better for our children than we had it still applies. To that end, iLuv's i1255 is a "luxury" any college-bound student should appreciate. In fact, anyone delaying the leap to a Blu-ray disc player and HDTV should find the i1255 a nice A/V addition that won't exhaust a bank account.

Convergence Is The Key

Essentially, the i1255 is nothing more than a single-disc, front slot-loading, progressive scan, standard DVD player with multiple viewing angles, subtitle support, and other basics. Negating the fact that the i1255 lacks an HDMI-out port and Blu-ray support is the fact that plenty of people own movie collections of standard DVDs that they watch on non-HDTVs. Beyond outputting video via S-Video, component, and composite video outputs, the i1255 also has a coaxial digital audio output and can play back MP3 and audio CDs, JPEG (Joint Photographic Experts Group) images on CD, and Kodak Picture CDs.

All these traits are fine enough but nothing overly impressive, right? What adds to the i1255's appeal is its included iPod dock and audio ports to attach a 5.1-channel speaker system. If your college student doesn't own an iPod, there's a good chance his or her roommate does. Regardless, beyond charging a docked iPod, the i1255 can display TV shows, music videos, and movies from an iPod with video playback support, including nano, touch, video, and classic models. (The i1255's component video and 5.1-channel features only work with DVD, however.) Suddenly, the i1255 can transform any plain-Jane dorm room into a decent home-theater setting with surround-sound capabilities for a penny shy of \$150—provided the student already owns a 5.1 speaker system. If not, iLuv sells the i1277 (\$224), which includes the same iPod dock/charging/video-out abilities but ships with a 5.1-channel speaker system.

Navigating video and audio stored on a docked iPod, including from my nano and video test models, was a snap via the straightforward but thorough on-screen display that appears on the TV screen and that iLuv states it designed specifically for iPods. iLuv also includes a remote that provides full DVD control and several iPod-specific buttons.

Construction-wise, the plastic and extremely light i1255 is black with silver trimming and strongly resembles a gaming console, so it will fit in aesthetically with most settings. An included quick setup guide helps make quick work of the required connections and settings, and a front-panel LCD indicates whether you're in DVD or iPod mode. In addition to Play/Pause, Stop, Reverse, and Forward buttons, a DVD/iPod button toggles between either function. Located at back are the video and audio ports. Unfortunately, an auxiliary line-in jack isn't included, which would have made it possible to attach non-iPod devices, such as another DAP, to at least listen to audio via a connected speaker system.

Overall, the i1255 isn't going to knock anyone over with its feature set. Even the inclusion of an iPod dock and 5.1-channel audio support isn't all that unique. Still, not all new devices are meant to be cutting-edge. Some, including the i1255, are merely designed to serve common purposes ably and at an affordable price, which is something any penny-pinching college student should appreciate. ■

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Mininotebook, netbook, ultraportable—call it what you will. I'm referring to the small, portable laptops that are the recent hype of the computer world. Although the terminology is a little fuzzy, as is the criteria that define these little devices, they are nonetheless smaller, lighter, cheaper, and altogether simpler versions of conventional laptops.

I recently tested MSI's newest iteration of its popular Wind Series notebooks, the MSI Wind U123, and for the purpose of this article, I'll stick to calling it a netbook. The Wind U123 offers the features that are becoming standard expectations for all netbooks on the market, but it also has a few standout qualities that distinguish it from the rest.

The Wind U123 has a 10.2-inch widescreen LCD with 1,024 x 600 resolution (a nice size for a netbook screen, as most netbook displays range between 8 inches and 10 inches). It's powered by the new Intel Atom 1.66GHz N280 processor (the previous Winds featured the Atom N270). It has a large 160GB SATA (Serial Advanced Technology Attachment) hard drive and 1GB of RAM (upgradeable to 2GB).

The Wind U123 runs Windows XP Home. (Most netbooks aren't powerful enough to run Windows Vista, but some include the Linux operating system.) It includes a 4-in-1 memory card reader, built-in 2-channel stereo speakers and a microphone, and three USB ports. The model I tested has built-in 802.11b/g/n Wi-Fi and is also Bluetooth-capable.

The standout feature of the U123-003 is the 9-cell battery. (The Wind U123 is also available with a 6-cell battery for \$379.99.) In my tests, the battery lasted more than 7.5 hours on a single charge. When attached, the battery sticks out significantly from the bottom, but if used on a flat surface, it doubles as a stand that props up the netbook to an angle more comfortable for typing—this is a nice feature, as typing on the smaller keyboard takes some getting used to.

So, just how small is this little guy? The U123-003 measures approximately 1.3 x 10.25 x 7 inches (HxWxD) and weighs 3.2 pounds (with the 9-cell battery attached). It comes with a protective case, which is very basic, but it does the trick. I

was able to slide the Wind and its case into my purse and tote it around without even noticing it was there. (I confess that I often carry a somewhat larger purse than necessary, but my point is that the Wind is pretty tiny.)

The U123 features MSI EasyFace, built-in face recognition software that lets the user adjust the levels of security identification. You can configure EasyFace LogOn, which lets you log on using your face, and EasyFace Auto-Locker, a feature that powers down the screen during periods of no face detection. Creating a face database is simple: Open the MSI EasyFace Manager software, position your face in front of the built-in 1.3MP (megapixel) Web cam, and say cheese. In my tests, the facial ID software was hit-and-miss; it worked during the initial setup, but on subsequent logon attempts, it didn't recognize me (maybe I was having a bad hair day). When it failed to identify me, I had to manually enter my logon password, which I personally prefer anyway.

Overall, I enjoyed using the MSI Wind. It was perfect for toting around to coffee shops and the library for those times when all I needed to do was check email, surf the Web, and type documents (including this article). But, for more intensive computing tasks and longer typing sessions, my obvious choice is to use my standard-sized notebook.

So, is the MSI Wind—or any netbook, for that matter—right for you? It depends on how you intend to use it. The Wind is not really designed to be a notebook replacement, but rather a secondary travel companion that you can easily take on the go. Therefore, if you're a frequent traveler who needs a highly portable computer for email, Internet, and light application tasks, or if you're looking for a reasonably priced laptop for a student but are not ready to spring for a more powerful conventional laptop, then yes, it's an attractive option. And, if you're already sold on the idea of a netbook, is the MSI Wind U123-003, in particular, a good fit for you? Considering the long battery life and the wallet-friendly price tag, it's definitely worth a look. ■

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Call us shallow and materialistic, but more often than not, we want better stuff than we have. Personally, I have a fairly cruddy old DV camcorder that records in standard definition (or less, from the looks of things). On the other hand, I'm still pretty happy with the lush sound of my stereo speakers and subwoofer when I put on a DVD, even though they don't give me surround sound.

Being American, I covet things left and right. Being cheap, I'd prefer to pay as little as possible for those things, as long as they meet my needs. Hence, over the last few weeks I tried out some inexpensive upgrades.

Genius G-Shot HD520

If you've spent any time with bulky cameras and camcorders, you might have come to the conclusion that the pocket-sized model you have with you is a lot more useful than the big camera you leave at home, even if the latter takes better-looking pictures or video. Heck, even camera phones are considered good enough for casual shots in the age of Twitter and Facebook.

This palm-sized camcorder competes against rivals such as the Flip MinoHD (\$229.99; www.theflip.com) and UltraHD (\$199.99). It can shoot 720p HD video, which it compresses in the MPEG-4 (Moving Picture Experts Group-4) (H.264) format and stores on an SD card (not included). It doubles as a 5MP (megapixel) still-image camera that can upscale photos to 11MP, with autofocus and face recognition. There are HDMI and composite cable connections for TV display, plus a USB port for offloading video to a computer.

So what does 720p video look like from a \$149.99 camera? Well, not as nice as that of a more expensive HD camcorder, but the video can be reasonably good under bright lighting when the camera is not moving rapidly.

Outdoor scenes look a little like a video game, with some things being pixilated or softly focused (branches, leaves, dog fur) and others being sharp and clear (faces, tree bark, houses). The control lever for the 5X digital zoom is somewhat abrupt until you get used to it. Red and orange colors seem to shift a little, too, but that's nitpicking. I was able to capture some very intricate still images of fabric patterns with the HD520, although its built-in flash really needs red-eye reduction.

There's more, such as motion-detecting surveillance recording, ebook display, video and music playback, voice recording, and easy YouTube uploading. For students and other active users, this G-Shot is simply Genius.

Sony HTS-S360

A Sony HTB (home theater in a box) for \$349.99? What's the catch?

Not much, from a practical point of view. It doesn't come with a DVD or BD (Blu-ray Disc) player, but then I've always wondered why most HTBs do. It doesn't include any cables other than speaker wires, but that's not unusual. And it doesn't come with speaker stands or wall mounts, but you can add some.

On the plus side, it will take up to 1080p video from your BD player or HDMI-equipped DVD player and pass it through to your HDTV. There's a microphone for use with Sony's Digital Cinema Auto Calibration hands-free setup feature.

Sony loaned me this impressive kit when I wrote an HTB installation article in the August issue (page 81). Of course, I kept it around for a while for "testing." The system's sound quality is intense and clean, and it's more than loud enough for a medium-sized room.

About the only complaint I had was that the subwoofer seemed to let the techno music get a little lost in the gunfire when Neo and Trinity shot up the lobby in "The Matrix." Still, I couldn't find fault with its performance with any other movie. For a passive sub with a mere 6 3/8-inch woofer, it certainly was authoritative.

Speaking of movies, the HTS-S360 can decode DVD's audio formats, but not BD's more advanced ones. In other words, the high-def soundtracks you'll be able to listen to at their full quality will depend on the formats your BD player can decode. ■



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Built For Adventure

Olympus Stylus Tough-8000

TARA SIMMONS BANTAM

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Digital cameras are often so compact that users expect to take them everywhere, but they're still sensitive electronic devices, so that's not always possible. The Olympus Stylus Tough-8000 can withstand a lot, and it seems to have been built with the rugged adventurer or extreme sports enthusiast in mind. And while I usually say "No thank you" to skiing, water sports, and "extreme" activities in general, this solid camera still offers a lot of benefits to someone like me, as I often find myself caught in the rain without an umbrella, and I drop things. Frequently.

The 8000 looks and feels tough with a metal body and visible screws. Olympus reports that this sturdy, shock-absorbing camera can withstand a 6.6-foot drop and up to 220 pounds of pressure, and it stood up to my various dropping and smooshing tests. That's good news for adventurers and parents alike. It can also withstand freezing temperatures up to 14 degrees Fahrenheit. The camera is compact (2.4 x 3.7 x 0.85 inches [HxWxD]), and while the heavy-duty structure adds to the camera's weight, it wasn't hard to handle—on dry land,

**Stylus Tough-8000****\$399.99****Olympus****(888) 553-4448****www.olympusamerica.com**

anyway. The 8000 is waterproof up to 33 feet, and in water, the weight could be a problem. It doesn't float, so if you lose your grip, you'll be looking for it at the bottom of the lake. Using the included wrist strap should help prevent that. On the plus side, the seals and hinged doors that cover the battery and multiuse connector port felt well-built and trustworthy.

The buttons on the 8000 are small, but I never had a problem pressing the correct one. The 8000 includes a Tap Control feature that's aimed at making the camera easier to use while underwater or wearing gloves. If you enable the Tap Control capabilities, you can change a few of the camera's settings with a solid thump to the top, back,

or sides of the camera. Controls include flash adjustment, entering playback mode (and flipping through images), turning the Tap Control feature on or off, and setting the macro mode. It seemed like a novelty in the open air, but when using the camera in the water, it was a feature I appreciated. It was simple to set the camera to one of the underwater modes and occasionally tap to make adjustments or check out the images I'd captured on the 2.7-inch LCD.

Along with four underwater shooting modes (Underwater Snapshot, Underwater Wide1, Underwater Wide2, and Underwater Macro), there are a variety of other preset modes, including Portrait, Landscape, Night Scene, Sunset, Candle, and Sport. The ability to make adjustments to things such as the white balance affords you some control while shooting in these preset modes. A manual mode lets you set the ISO (International Organization for Standardization) sensitivity and take high-speed sequential pictures (up to five frames per second at the highest quality setting), though you can't adjust the shutter speed. The highest ISO setting, 1600, lets you take photos in low light, though this level introduced a fair amount of digital noise in images. The 8000 performed best in full light—not surprising for a camera built for outdoor use.

Another mode, Beauty, gets its own position on the 8000's exterior mode dial. Fun, but not entirely useful, this feature detects faces in an image and then automatically evens skin tones and smoothes wrinkles, saving both the original and the retouched photo. The difference is discernable, but not exactly dramatic.

Other features include a 3.6X wide-angle optical zoom, so you can get more of the scene in your picture. Adding to the 8000's ruggedness, the zoom lens doesn't protrude from the camera, so there's less risk you'll damage it while snapping a shot on the slopes.

The images the 8000 produced were largely clear and bright, and colors were accurate, though I would've liked to see more clarity in small details such as foliage. With a whopping 12MP (megapixels), there's plenty of room for cropping and enlarging. I wish the 8000 was a bit faster at processing images, but as a whole, this is a good camera, both for the adventurous and those who just need sturdy CE devices. ■

Head-To-Head: All-In-One Printers

Handle All Your Paper & Photo Needs

Have a project at home that requires copies of old documents or photos? Do you ever need to scan documents to your PC? All-in-one inkjet printers include all the above abilities, and most newer models also let you produce lab-quality photo prints. You can print a variety of paper sizes and types, ideal for people looking to create their own invitations, business cards, or digital scrapbooks, and because you can scan and directly copy material, you can store digital copies on your PC or make duplicates. In this

(kilobits per second) speed that gives the MFC-5890cn the ability to quickly deliver color faxes. Brother indicates that the MFC-5890cn can produce one page every three seconds, and our tests confirmed those numbers. For people who are conscientious about conserving paper, the MFC-5890cn can store the faxes and send them to the printer's 3.3-inch color LCD for viewing. Thus, you can read the fax and determine if it's a document you need to print out, and you can also preview faxes before you send them out.



Brother MFC-5890cn

head-to-head article, we'll take a look at all-in-one printers from Brother, Epson, HP, and Kodak.

Brother MFC-5890cn

There's a lot to like about the MFC-5890cn. Besides the traditional scan, copy, and printing capabilities, it also functions as a fax machine. The document feeder at the top of the MFC-5890cn can hold up to 50 pages, which is handy if you often receive faxes because you won't need to frequently refill the document feeder tray. The integrated fax modem offers a 33.6Kbps

The standard paper tray, located at the front of the printer's base, can hold up to 150 sheets of paper. Although the paper capacity isn't astounding, Brother designed the printer to use up to 11- x 17-inch paper, which is handy if you need to print out legal- or ledger-sized material, such as spreadsheets, signs, or panoramic photos. In terms of quality, the MFC-5890cn did a great job with text. It produced clear text at 7.5-point font size (Times New Roman), and there was no evidence of blurring in bolded fonts in any of our tests. In terms of photo quality,

the MFC-5890cn did a great job with detail, and colors generally looked sharp.

The MFC-5890cn features one of the more unique designs in a printer. Rather than having the USB and Ethernet ports located in the rear of the printer, the connectivity ports are on the inside of the printer, and Brother built in an open channel on the inside of the printer to route your cables. Additionally, the ink cartridges are located at the front of the printer behind a pop-out panel, which makes the cartridges easy to install and remove. The 3.3-inch LCD screen helps to navigate the features, and the screen's display is crisp. The only downside to the MFC-5890cn was its document output speed. Our 10-page test document took two minutes to print, which was slower than the fax rate, because computer printouts were set to Normal quality, while faxes default at a low print quality.

Epson WorkForce 310

Designed with business users in mind, Epson's WorkForce 310 adds fax capabilities to its all-in-one features, and it's one of the more affordable all-in-one printers available. If you're running short on desk space, you'll appreciate the WorkForce 310's footprint of 11.9 x 18.1 x 21.3 inches (HxWxD), which makes it smaller than a number of popular print-only inkjets.

The WorkForce 310 can copy documents at 25 to 400% zoom, and it can automatically fit a document to fill a page. For example, the WorkForce 310 can format a legal original to a letter-sized copy. When handling documents, it flew through our 10-page test Word document (in the printer's Text mode), producing all 10 pages in only 57 seconds at Normal quality. If you need a fast inkjet, you'll definitely want to consider the WorkForce 310, and it delivered dark text that seemed to jump off the page. With photos, it delivered some of the most accurate

BUYING TIPS

• What Type Of Connection Do You Need?

Some all-in-one printers feature built-in Wi-Fi, and if you have a wireless network, you'll have the freedom to locate the printer anywhere you want, rather than next to your wired router or PC. If you need to share the printer among multiple people, wireless connectivity is important.

• Ink Cost

While you're shopping for the printer, check prices for replacement ink cartridges. In some cases, one set of replacement cartridges can cost more than half of what you paid for the all-in-one printer.

colors of our test models. Despite the printer's speedy text output, it was quite slow with photos in its Text And Image mode, producing a 5- x 7-inch photo in a minute.

With its entry-level price, we expected Epson to skimp on some features, such as the front panel, but other than the lack of an LCD, the printer's front panel was just as easy to use as

the printer's speed dial, and there are five quick-dial buttons on the front panel. Its fax memory can hold up to 180 pages. Another plus is that this model uses Epson's DuraBrite inks, which we found to be extremely resistant to smudges and smears. If you accidentally spill water on a printer page, the inks won't run, so the text will still be legible.

noted that all of the trays on the WorkForce 310 fold down, which is handy if you have to move the printer or need to save desk space.



Epson WorkForce 310



HP Photosmart C6380

the other printers in the roundup. To switch to a mode, you just need to click the Fax, Copy, or Scan buttons. And the large front panel offers bigger buttons than many other models you'll see. You can store up to 60 numbers in

The 30-page document feeder at the top of the printer worked well, and we like that Epson lets you fold the top output tray shut, so you have room to place documents in the automatic document feeder while copying. We

HP Photosmart C6380

This all-white, all-in-one from HP is heavy on photo features. For photo quality, the Photosmart C6380 features five ink colors (black, cyan, magenta, yellow, and photo black) and uses HP's Vivera inks, which are designed to produce true-to-life colors that will resist fading for more than 100 years. In our testing, the Photosmart C6380's prints were top-notch, including vivid brights, deep, dark shadows, and natural-looking skin tones. The all-in-one also features memory card slots for all the popular types as well as a USB port that lets you print photos directly from a camera or USB flash drive. To help you fix unedited photos, the Photosmart C6380 includes HP's Adaptive Lighting and Auto Red-eye Removal tools, which you can select from the 2.4-inch color LCD.

The HP Photosmart C6380 lacks fax capabilities, but its 4,800 dpi, 48-bit scanner performed well with our test color flyers and photos. You can save scanned content to your PC or a connected flash drive. In terms of copy features, it can copy color documents at up to 31cpm (copies per minute) in color and 33cpm in black and white. Copied photos looked nearly identical to the original. HP also built a number of connectivity features into the C6380, including Wi-Fi (802.11b/g), Ethernet, and wired USB. HP smartly includes a wireless setup wizard that made it easy to connect the printer to our wireless network.

The printer features two paper trays. The main tray can hold up to 125 pages of legal-sized paper, and above the main tray, there's a 20-sheet photo paper tray that's large enough for up to 5- x 7-inch photo paper. Both trays include adjustable levers to suit the paper size you choose to use. HP includes a variety of printing software with the printer, including its Photosmart Essential

yellow highlights, and with its rounded edges and concealed paper trays, you won't immediately recognize it as a printer. The ESP 7 includes built-in Wi-Fi, Ethernet, and USB connectivity as well as memory card slots for the popular types and ports for USB flash drives and cameras. Other conveniences include a duplexer for double-sided printing and the ability to detect what type of

and excellent color depth. We like that Kodak adds other photo conveniences, including a 40-sheet photo tray that can hold either 4- x 6-inch or 5- x 7-inch photo paper. You can edit and crop photos from the ESP 7's 3-inch color LCD, and the menu system was the most intuitive of the all-in-one printers we tested. Text detail in documents was clearly legible at 7.5-point fonts, which was impressive considering the dark text delivered by the ESP 7.

One downside to the ESP 7 is its slow print speed. It took two minutes and 20 seconds in our 10-page Word document test, and a 4- x 6-inch photo was finished in 50 seconds. But if you're not in hurry, you'll be happy with the results. The simple interface and handy front-loading ports and memory slots are nice for those who want a printer that's easy to use.



Kodak ESP 7

software that gives you control of scanner and printout quality. It also gives you a tool for editing and printing your photos. Overall, the HP Photosmart C6380 is ideal for people who need an all-in-one with a focus on photos.

Kodak ESP 7

The attractively designed ESP 7 features a polished black casing with

paper is in the paper tray and how much paper is left in the tray. Other than fax capabilities, the ESP 7 offers nearly all the features you can find on all-in-one printers.

Like the rest of Kodak's all-in-one models, the ESP 7 uses Kodak's affordable ink cartridges (\$9.99 for black and \$14.99 for color), and the color cartridge features five colors of ink. With six total ink colors, ESP 7 produced photos with accurate color

Match Up Your Needs

Each of the all-in-one printers in our roundup offered slightly different advantages, but all the models performed well for printing, scanning, and copying. Check out our chart to see the primary advantages of each printer and to find the one that will best suit your individual printing purposes. ■

BY NATHAN LAKE

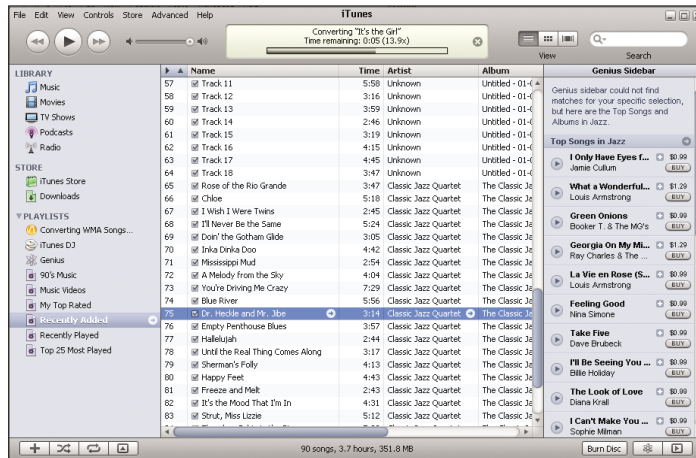
PRODUCT INFORMATION

Printer Information	Price	Company	Contact Info	URL	Notable Features	Systems Supported
MFC-5890cn	\$199.99	Brother	(877) 276-8437	www.brother-usa.com	High-quality fax, copy, and scanner that can handle ledger-sized documents.	 Win XP  Vista 32/64 bit  Mac
WorkForce 310	\$129.99	Epson	(800) 873-7766	www.epson.com	Fast print speeds, good text quality, and when faxing, it can scan pages as fast as three seconds per page.	 Win XP  Vista 32/64 bit  Mac
Photosmart C6380	\$199.99	HP	(800) 752-0900	www.hp.com	Delivers high-quality photos and includes lots of nice photo features.	 Win XP  Vista 32/64 bit  Mac  Linux
ESP 7	\$199.99	Kodak	(800) 235-6325	www.kodak.com	Affordable ink cartridges make this all-in-one appealing.	 Win XP  Vista 32/64 bit  Mac

Powerful Player

iTunes 8

Free | Apple
(408) 996-1010 | www.apple.com



Key Features: This powerful music player syncs with iPod and Apple TV and connects directly to the iTunes Store for music and video downloads. The Genius sidebar autcreates playlists and makes suggestions.

One of the few music players that works equally well with both Mac and Windows PCs is also now one of the best. The newest edition is truly a wonder, with so many options we cannot detail them all here. (After you read this, head to www.apple.com/itunes/features for the full scoop.)

First, and perhaps foremost for music lovers, iTunes 8 integrates seamlessly with the iTunes Store, and all of the 10 million songs available at the store are now available as iTunes Plus downloads. That means your downloads are top-quality (256Kbps [kilobits per second] AAC [Advanced Audio Coding] encoded) files that Apple asserts will be “virtually indistinguishable” from the original recordings.

Futhermore, iTunes Plus songs have no burn limitations or other DRM (digital rights management) restrictions. (Some song download sources

and/or media players limit you to a specific number of CD burns per song.) You can also upgrade any previously purchased iTunes songs to iTunes Plus for 30 cents each. (Music video upgrades are 60 cents apiece.)

Flexible & Focused

The iTunes 8 interface is similar to that of many media players, giving you the option to view your multimedia library by a variety of criteria, such as artist, genre, and album. It organizes all your material within a single interface, sorting media and links into Music, Movies, TV Shows, Podcasts, Applications, Radio, and Ringtones designations.

It also offers Genius, a suggestion feature that some will love but others may view as a marketing ploy. Play a song, click the Genius button, and iTunes 8 will scan your library and

aggregate similar songs into a playlist for you. Or, select a song, movie, or show in your library, and the Genius sidebar will make recommendations of similarly styled items you can purchase from iTunes straight through the sidebar. Genius is intuitive enough not to recommend anything you already own, and you can hide the Genius sidebar if you don't like it. We found the feature to be helpful and appealing.

iTunes 8 can also create playlists based on specific criteria, such as all the songs in a particular genre or all those that you have ripped to your PC in the past week. The program now features a Windows Media Player-style Visualizer that creates random, colorful 3D patterns that change with the tempo and beat of songs you play.

Faster, Better

Apple has made some tweaks under the cover, too. Tighter integration with the iTunes Store speeds up your ability to browse the offerings. CD ripping and burning, device syncing, and file archiving and searching have all had performance upgrades. You can even rip music from your CDs automatically into the iTunes Plus format.

As a final bonus, iTunes offers a Grid View that can display only the unwatched episodes of your TV show seasons and podcast subscriptions. This and many more functions, including more organizing functions, a graphic equalizer, a DJ feature, and intuitive data backup capabilities, make iTunes 8 a media player that will suit just about everyone. ■

BY JENNIFER FARWELL

Download & Upload Quickly

Free FTP

Free | CoffeeCup
(866) 734-4865; (678) 495-3480 | www.coffeecup.com



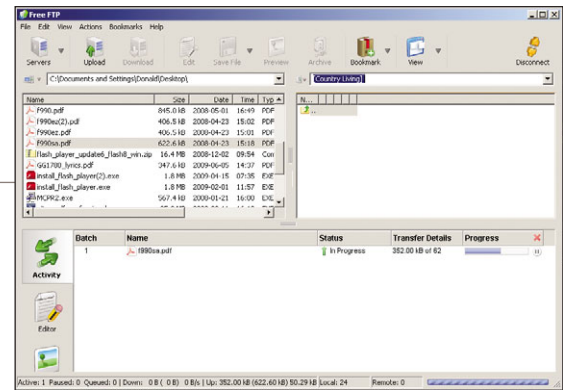
Do you frequently visit Web sites that require you to have FTP (File Transfer Protocol: a file exchange method that requires you to make a dedicated connection directly to a Web site's server) software in order to download or upload files to them? If so, you could shell out \$20 or more for advanced FTP software, or you can enjoy FTP features free. With CoffeeCup's Free FTP, you'll actually enjoy quite a bit of functionality—more than the average user requires, in fact.

The product's interface is uncomplicated and easy to use, and it supports drag-and-drop file transfers to and from any file or folder on your PC and the connected Web site. It can resume interrupted downloads and

Key Features: This small (in file size), free software makes quick work of downloading and uploading files to and from the Internet.

uploads and supports multiple server profiles (a profile is the Web address, username, and password you are given to access the site). Once you've entered the connection information, Free FTP will store it for future access. It lacks some advanced FTP features, such as the ability to schedule downloads in advance.

If you find a download or site that Free FTP can't handle or need more ad-



vanced features, you can step up to CoffeeCup's Direct FTP product (\$39; 21-day trial). But unless you are a power user, we don't think you'll need to. ■

BY JENNIFER FARWELL

Click Away

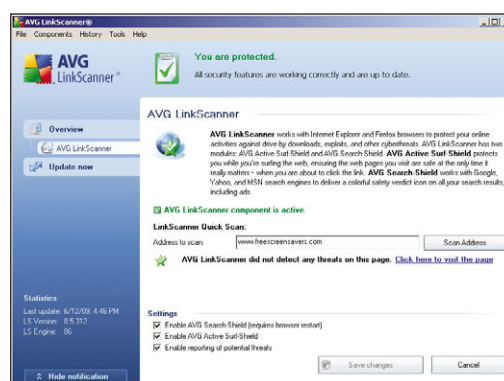
AVG LinkScanner

Free | AVG
Contact via online email form | www.avg.com



From security solution provider AVG Technologies comes LinkScanner, a safe browsing product that works inside Internet Explorer, Firefox, or Opera checking Web sites in real time for malicious content. Optionally, you can have LinkScanner check a Web address through a search box on the program's main interface. It scans every page on a site, comparing it against AVG's database of malware and other threats. This is important because malware is often nested deep within a site. It also ensures you can browse all but the infected pages.

LinkScanner also incorporates Safe Shield, which checks search results from the Google, Yahoo!, and MSN search engines so you'll know before you click if a site is safe. For safe sites,



LinkScanner displays a green star icon with a checkmark; for malicious sites, you'll see a red box icon with an X in it. The program will also alert you if the site is questionable or risky or if it cannot be scanned for some reason. Click the icon, and

Key Features: This standalone browser safety net scans Web sites to ensure they are not exhibiting malicious behaviors. It works with most security software.

LinkScanner will provide more information so you can decide whether or not to proceed. (LinkScanner will block you from entering malicious sites.) Cyber criminals are increasingly posting infected links, scam advertisements, and other threats that can trick you into putting your PC and its data at risk. A product such as LinkScanner is becoming a necessity for the unwary. ■

BY JENNIFER FARWELL



COMPILED BY JOSEPH MORAN

Microsoft News

New Zune HD Portable Media Player On Deck

Microsoft has announced a new version of its Zune portable media player device designed to take on the Apple iPod touch.

The Zune HD will sport a 3.3-inch, 480 x 272 OLED (organic light-emitting diode) widescreen display with multitouch capability, an integrated HD Radio receiver, built-in Wi-Fi, and an Internet Explorer-based Web browser. When paired with an optional docking station, the Zune HD will be able to output 720p high-definition video to an HD-capable television.

The Zune HD is set to go on sale this fall, though storage options and pricing weren't available at press time.

Microsoft Money Discontinued

After 17 years on the market and about a year after annual software updates were suspended, Microsoft has discontinued sales of its Money personal finance software.

Microsoft will continue to support online services for current Money customers until the end of January 2011 or until two years after product activation, whichever comes first.

Ford Produces Its Millionth SYNC-Equipped Vehicle

Ford's SYNC voice-activated automotive communication and entertainment system has proven popular since its debut in 2007, with the Microsoft software-powered technology now found on 80% of the vehicles Ford sells in North America.

Ford recently produced the millionth SYNC-equipped vehicle, and to commemorate the milestone, Ford CEO Alan Mulally personally delivered the millionth vehicle—a 2010 Fusion Hybrid sedan—to Microsoft CEO Steve Ballmer.

Ford CEO Alan Mulally delivers the millionth SYNC-equipped vehicle to Microsoft CEO Steve Ballmer.



Windows Tips

Switch Users With A Desktop Shortcut In WinXP & Vista Ultimate

Windows XP's and Vista's Switch User feature lets you give someone else access to the computer without requiring you to log out of your own account first. The Switch User option is available via the Start menu, but you can access it more quickly by creating a Desktop shortcut for it. (NOTE: This works for all versions of WinXP and for Vista Ultimate but not Vista Home Basic or Home Premium.)

To create the Switch User shortcut, right-click a blank portion of the Desktop and select New and then click Shortcut. In the location box, type `c:\windows\system32\tsdiscon.exe`, click Next, name the shortcut Switch User, and click Finish. When you use the shortcut, your account will lock and the system will return to the Welcome screen so another user can log in. To give the shortcut a more suitable icon, right-click it, choose Properties, and click Change Icon.

Use IE8 Compatibility View In WinXP Or Vista

If you've recently upgraded to Internet Explorer 8, you may find that certain Web sites no longer look or work properly, which can happen when viewing sites that were designed to work with Internet Explorer 7. (Because IE8 is more compliant with Web standards than earlier versions, it renders pages differently than its predecessor.)

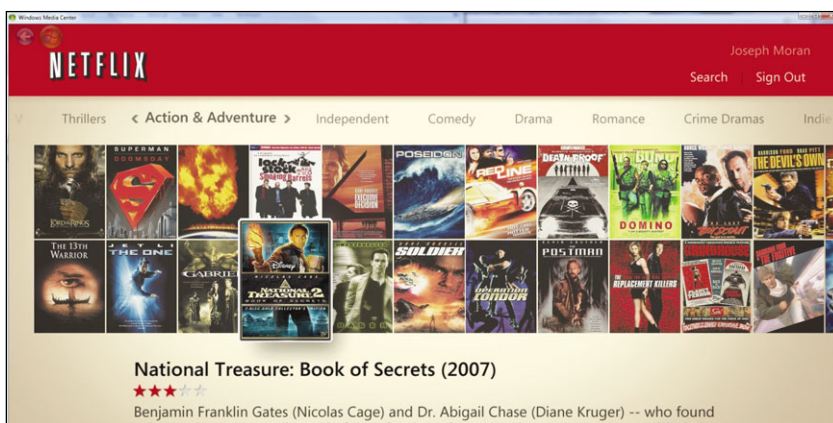
When you encounter a page that may have problems with IE8, an icon that looks like a broken page will appear to the right of the Address Bar. Clicking it will put IE8 into Compatibility View, which should allow the page to display correctly. The page may take a second or two to refresh after you turn on Compatibility View, but you won't have to restart the browser.

To have IE8 check a database of Web sites and automatically enable Compatibility View when you visit a site that may need it, click Tools and Compatibility View Settings and check Include Updated Website Lists From Microsoft. From here, you can also create your own list of sites for Compatibility View.

Watch Netflix Movies In Windows Media Center (Vista Home Premium, Ultimate)

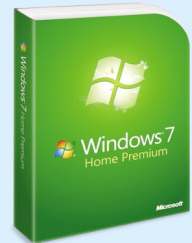
Netflix's Watch Instantly feature has given members the ability to stream movies to Internet Explorer on a PC for some time, but Vista Home Premium and Ultimate users can now watch them from the more video- and remote control-friendly Windows Media Center instead.

To set Media Center for Netflix, find the Netflix icon in Windows Media Center under TV + Movies and then click the Install button to download the necessary software (a Silverlight plugin). After Media Center restarts, you'll be able to log in to your Netflix account to watch movies and manage your DVD queue.



Windows News

Windows 7 Launch Date & Pricing Set



Microsoft announced that Windows 7 will be available preloaded on PCs and on store shelves beginning Oct. 22. Pricing for the packaged full retail versions of Windows 7 Home Premium and Ultimate will be \$199.99 and \$319.99, respectively, while the upgrade versions will sell for \$119.99 and \$199.99, respectively.

To discourage people from postponing PC purchases until Win7's October launch date, Microsoft is offering a Windows 7 Upgrade Option Program, which will allow customers who buy a Vista Home Premium or Ultimate PC from a participating system manufacturer or retailer between June 26, 2009 and Jan. 31, 2010 to receive a low- or no-cost upgrade to the corresponding version of Win7 when it becomes available. Program details are available at tinyurl.com/ktd67r.

U.S. Army Moving To Vista

While a number of consumers and businesses now have their sights firmly fixed on Win7, the U.S. Army says it has begun the process of upgrading all of its Windows-based PCs to Vista.

According to the Army News Service, the Army is undertaking the upgrade project—which also includes switching from Office 2003 to Office 2007—to improve security and standardize its information systems. The Army plans to have its 744,000 desktop PCs running Vista by Dec. 31.

Windows XP: Disk Cleanup & Beyond

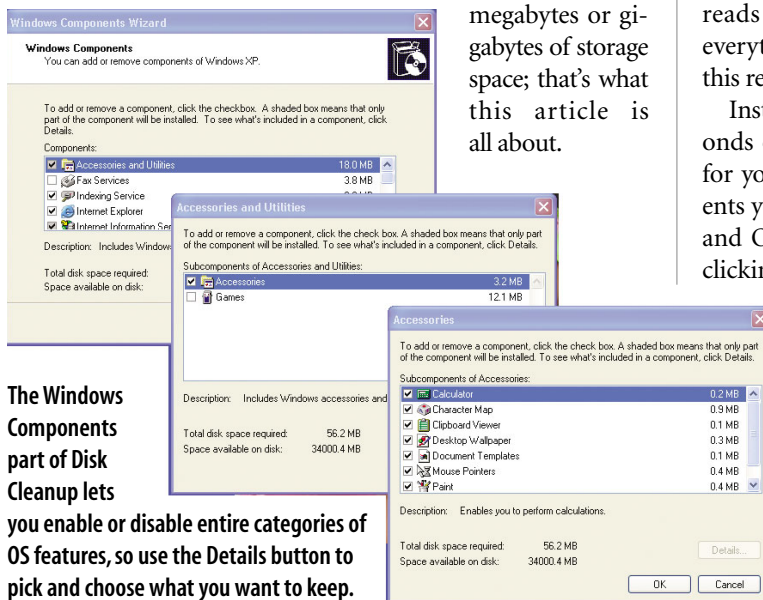
It's no fun to run low on hard drive space. Windows XP needs some extra drive capacity in order to run properly, especially if you only have 512MB of RAM or less. Run low, and WinXP will scold you with a pop-up message and may slow to a crawl.

"Get rid of stuff," is the refrain you'll hear from family and friends. If you don't want to buy a bigger hard drive, you'll need to clean house. Deleting unnecessary data is your best move in the short term.

However, the critical bits are what you delete and how you delete it. For instance, it's fairly obvious that if you never use an instant messaging app, it's unnecessary, and you can uninstall it. It isn't so apparent what other files are "junk," nor whether you can safely nuke them with a click of your mouse.

One thing you should *never* do is to delete individual files that you didn't personally create and/or can't identify for certain. Over the years, our *Smart Computing* Tech Support crew has received numerous calls from well-meaning subscribers who have experienced computer trouble after they deleted files that were crucial to Windows or an application, all in the name of freeing up hard drive space. There are safer, more automat-

ed ways to regain megabytes or gigabytes of storage space; that's what this article is all about.



The Windows Components part of Disk Cleanup lets you enable or disable entire categories of OS features, so use the Details button to pick and choose what you want to keep.

Use Disk Cleanup

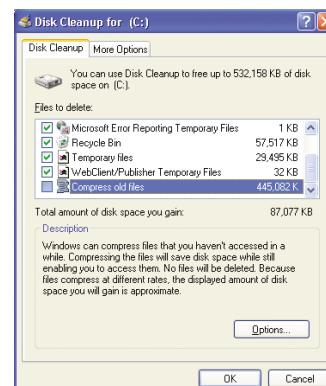
WinXP's Disk Cleanup utility gives you a handy way to eliminate digital detritus. To start it, press WIN (the Windows logo key)-E to launch Windows Explorer. Alternatively, right-click the Start button and select Explore.

Next, right-click the hard drive partition that's running low on space, such as Local Disk (C:) and click Properties. A pie chart will show you how much of the drive is storing data (the blue section) and how much is free (the purple or pink section).

It may be tempting to simply click the Compress Drive To Save Disk Space checkbox and then OK, which will digitally compress your data to take up less drive capacity. Don't do it. You'll certainly free up some storage space, but you'll also undoubtedly slow down your PC by a considerable degree. With WinXP's drive compression enabled, the CPU will have to decompress every single bit of data the OS (operating system) reads from your hard drive and compress or recompress everything it writes to your hard drive. Clinically speaking, this real-time performance drain will drive you nuts.

Instead, click Disk Cleanup. WinXP will spend a few seconds or minutes figuring out which data is (probably) safe for you to delete or compress, in its opinion. When it presents you with a list of file categories, such as Temporary Files and Offline Web Pages, you can select or deselect them by clicking their checkboxes. Each category will come with an estimate of the amount of hard drive space you'll be able to free up if you let Disk Cleanup erase the files in it, such as 57,517KB (about 56MB).

Click a category, and it might present you with a View Files or View Pages button. This will let you see the category's offline Web pages or temporary files. Note that if you choose to let Disk Cleanup process a category, it won't delete all of the files shown in the window if some are still needed. This is the reason why certain categories are listed with



It may seem worthwhile to check the Compress Old Files box in Disk Cleanup, but the capacity you'll gain may not be worth the speed you'll lose.

0KB of potential drive space recovery, even though View Files shows several multikilobyte or even multimegabyte files in them.

You can clean up most of the categories without any harmful effects, but you'll want to take a closer look at a few of them before you make a decision. For example, you may want to consider leaving the Recycle Bin unselected if there's a chance you might still need to restore a file you've deleted. Use View Files to double-check. Also, don't include Compress Old Files for the performance reasons outlined above.

When you're satisfied with the death warrants you've issued, click OK and Yes. Disk Cleanup will do its thing.

Other Stuff

Next, click Disk Cleanup again and then the More Options tab. The Installed Programs and System Restore cleanup options are fairly self-explanatory, but let's take a closer look at Windows Components. Click its Clean Up button.

Some of the categories in the Components list have a Details button, which lets you view their subcategories. Likewise, you can click some subcategories' Details buttons, too. This lets you "drill down" to their individual Windows components, such as Minesweeper and the Calculator.

The idea is to disable and delete parts of Windows you never use. Conversely, if you have your installation CD handy, you can take this opportunity to install Windows components that didn't make it onto your PC by default. Be careful what you check and uncheck before you click OK and Next, as you'll affect each item in every category or subcategory you modify (checked boxes with a gray background



Disk Cleanup's More Options tab lets you get rid of other stuff that can take up scads of storage space.

indicate partially selected categories). Click Finish when you're done.

Second Opinion

Realistically, if you're in a position in which you have to run Disk Cleanup, an upgrade to a larger hard drive isn't a bad idea. Retail drives come with software and detailed instructions to help you migrate Windows, your apps, and all of your data to the new drive. The chances are excellent that you'll not only gain elbow room but overall computer performance, as well, thanks to manufacturers' speed gains with every new product generation. Moreover, with 1TB drives available for less than \$80 at this writing, there's no question that you'll get a ton of value for your dollar. ■

BY MARTY SEMS

What Else Can You Get Rid Of?

The traditional first step when you're running short on drive space is to uninstall applications you don't use. Sometimes, however, not all parts of a program leave town during the uninstallation process.

Occasionally, you'll see folders left behind, such as in C:\PROGRAM FILES. If you know that you've uninstalled Abiword, for example, but you still see a folder named C:\PROGRAM FILES\ABISUITE2 on your hard drive, it's probably OK to delete it.

On the other hand, you might not want to get rid of any DLL (dynamic-link library) files still residing in the folder. A few applications alter DLLs necessary for other programs to function, but they don't necessarily return the DLLs to their previous states during uninstallation. Hence, we've encountered errors and goony PC behavior after deleting a program's DLLs, even if Windows claimed that no other application needed them.

Next, look for extraneous video clips, such as raw footage left over from a DVD-burning project. Digital photos can suck up space, too, especially when you combine multimegapixel, multimegabyte picture files with the digital shutterbug tendency to

take extra pictures. Archive your multimedia to an external drive or DVD.

Here's a biggie: Video games you no longer play. Some of these can total 6GB or more, so they're obvious candidates for uninstallation. If you can find the folder in which each game keeps the player's saved games, back it up first, so they'll be available if you ever reinstall the game.

You probably don't need a downloaded program's installation file after you install the app. Back up or delete those files. (They'll typically have a .exe, .msi, or .zip extension.)

As for redundant files, there are numerous utilities that can find them so you can delete them. Heatsoft's Clone Cleaner Lite (www.clonecleaner.com) is a freebie. Bolide's Image Comparer (\$34.95; www.bolidesoft.com), meanwhile, can detect duplicate photos by their content, not just their names, sizes, and other attributes.

Finally, Disk Cleanup can empty the Recycle Bin, but you can also do it yourself if you like. In Windows Explorer, right-click it and select Empty Recycle Bin. Later, to keep files you delete from continuing to take up space in the Bin, erase them permanently with the SHIFT-DELETE keystroke. ■

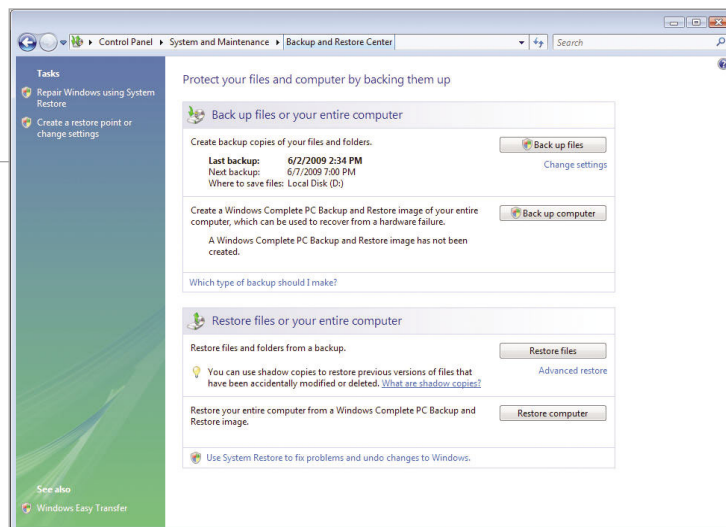
Windows Vista Built-In Backup

You lock your house and your car in order to protect your valuables, but are the valuable files on your computer protected, as well? If you haven't used a backup program to create a copy of your important files, then your data is vulnerable to being lost in the case of a failed drive or accidental deletion. Because no machinery is infallible, you can't rely on your hard drive to keep your data safe. Windows Vista has the Backup And Restore Center, which makes it easy and cost-effective to back up your system because there's no additional software to purchase (however, some may choose to purchase external hardware to store files). That means there's no excuse for not doing it today. Additionally, the Backup And Restore Center provides automatic settings so you can set your backups to run without ever having to worry about it again.

Create A Copy

Back up files. The backup capabilities of the Backup And Restore Center aren't as multifaceted as some of the backup software programs you can buy, but the Backup And Restore Center accomplishes the ultimate goal, which is creating an extra copy of your important information. One difference between many third-party backup utilities and Backup And Restore is that the third-party utilities will often-times let you select individual files, so you can pick and choose which items you want to make a copy of and which items don't need to be saved. The ability to be selective when you back up your data is helpful because you will use less space on the device you are keeping your backed-up files on. Backup And Restore lacks very specific selective capabilities and applies an all-inclusive technique instead.

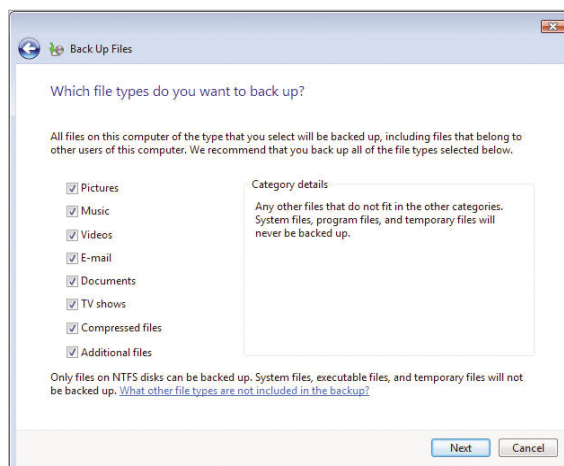
The Backup And Restore Center lets you choose categories of



The interface of the Backup and Restore Center provides information about the previous and the next scheduled backup.

files to back up, including pictures, music, videos, email, documents, TV shows, compressed files, and other additional files. Because the Backup And Restore Center doesn't distinguish between important files and nonessential files, when you select Pictures (for example), the Backup And Restore Center will make copies of both your precious family photos and graphical Desktop icons. It's also important to note that if a file doesn't fit into one of the available categories, it will not be backed up by the Backup And

Restore Center. You'll have to find an alternative means (such as a flash drive or an online file storage account) to back up those types of files. To back up files with the Backup And Restore Center, open your Control Panel by clicking the Start menu icon and choosing Control Panel. Click System And Maintenance, select Backup And Restore Center, and then click the button that reads Back Up Files. Select where you want to save your backup (such as a local drive, an external hard drive, or CDs and DVDs) and then click Next. (NOTE: If you have more than one drive in your system,



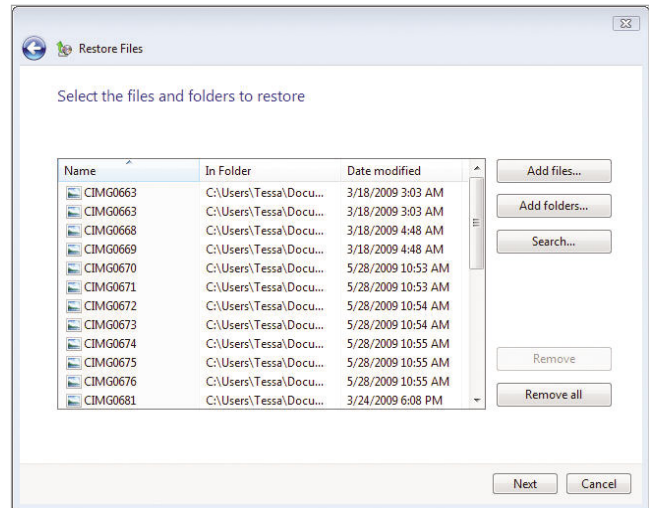
You will have a wide array of categories to choose from, but be aware that files that don't fit in these categories won't be backed up.

you will need to choose which one you are going to back up.) Now determine which types of files you want to back up and click Next. Then you can create automatic settings for future backups. Decide if you want to back up your files daily, weekly, or monthly; which day you want your backup to occur on; and what time you want the backup to take place. You will only have to select these settings the first time you back up your files. Click the Save Setting And Start Backup button, and the Backup And Restore Center will perform the backup. Depending on how much data you are backing up, this could take a few minutes or several hours. When your backup is complete, the Backup And Restore Center will list both the last backup and the next scheduled backup. If you complete a large project (for example) before the next scheduled backup and you want to save a copy, you can also perform a manual backup by clicking the Back Up Files Button in the Backup And Restore Center. If you want to change your automatic backup settings because, for instance, you find that backing up data monthly isn't enough or daily is too much, change your settings by clicking the Change Settings link under the Back Up Files button. Restoring your files once they've been backed up is just as easy as the backup process. In the Backup And Restore Center, you simply click the Restore Files button, select whether you want to restore files from your latest backup or a previous backup, and then click Next. Choose which files and folders you want restored by clicking the Add Files and Add Folders buttons. Click Next and then choose if you want your file restored to the original location or to a new location. Select Start Restore.

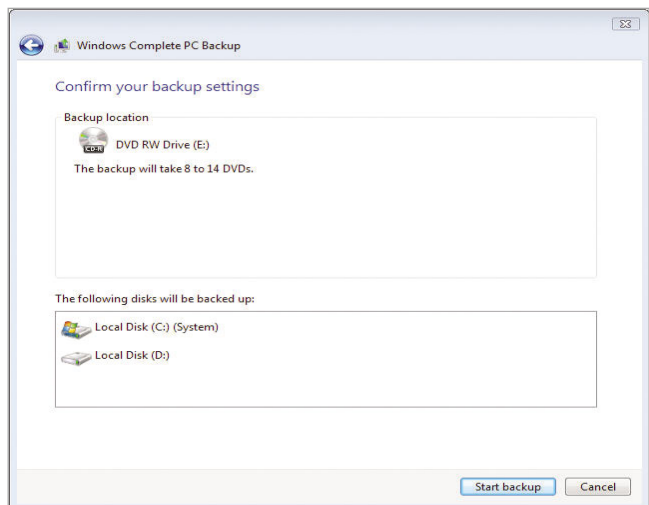
Complete PC backup. In addition to creating copies of files, you can back up your entire computer, including your operating system, personal settings, and data files, with the Backup And Restore Center in the Vista Ultimate, Business, and Enterprise editions (*NOTE: This is not available in Vista Home Basic or Home Premium*). If you have a hardware failure and you have to purchase a new hard drive, for example, you can restore absolutely everything to your new drive if it's backed up on an external storage device (such as a CD, DVD, or external hard drive). The Complete PC Backup basically takes a snapshot of your drive (including software programs, which cannot be restored by backing up files with the Backup And Restore Center), and absolutely everything is captured and saved.

To back up your entire computer, go to the Start menu and open the Control Panel. Select System And Maintenance and Backup And Restore Center. Click the Back Up Computer button. Once you select where you'd like to save the backup, click Next at the bottom of the window. Make sure the drives you want backed up are selected and confirm your backup settings. This window will also tell you how many DVDs you will need. Click Start Backup.

When you restore your computer to a hard drive, it's important to note that the hard drive will be reformatted,



You can pick one, multiple, or all backed-up files to be restored.



Before your Complete PC Backup begins, you can view how many CDs or DVDs it will take to back up your computer as well as which drives are included in the backup.

meaning it will wipe all the data away and replace it with the new data. To restore your computer from the Backup And Restore Center, click the Restore Computer button and then follow the on-screen prompts.

Back Up, Back Up, Back Up

Now that you know how easy it is to back up the data on your computer, you have no excuse to keep putting it off. While the Backup And Restore Center isn't as sophisticated as some third-party backup and restore programs, you can still protect your data from loss or damage, and nothing is more important than that. ■

BY TESSA WARNER BRENNAN

DIY Project

Set Up Your Own Windows Home Server

When you have multiple PCs on a home network, it's nice to have a single place to store and organize all of the family's important files. Adding a WHS (Windows Home Server) system to your network will give you centralized file storage along with a host of other features, including automatic PC backup and remote access to your files.

The easiest way to get WHS is to buy a device with the operating system preinstalled, but the price tags for such products range anywhere from \$400 to \$750. If you'd like a WHS but have a limited budget, you may be able to set one up by repurposing an older PC you already have, saving hundreds of dollars in the process. In this article, we'll show you how to use an old computer and a copy of WHS to create your own home server.

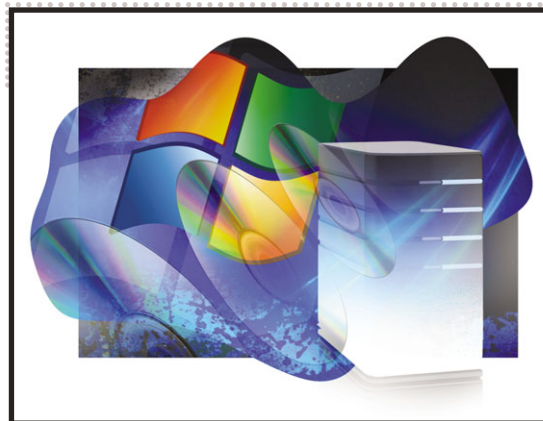
Choose A System

WHS doesn't require an especially powerful system—the minimum

hardware requirements are a 1GHz Pentium III CPU, 512MB of RAM, an 80GB hard drive, a DVD-ROM drive, and a wired Ethernet network adapter. Of course, a more recent CPU and a bit more RAM won't hurt, and you'll probably need a lot more than 80GB to store personal data, but even a PC that is three to five years old should prove more than sufficient in most cases. Moreover, you don't need to install additional internal hard drives to increase a system's storage capacity because WHS will work with external hard drives, and you can add them as needed.

Get The Software

Once you've identified a system to run WHS, the next step is to get a copy of the software. Unfortunately, it isn't sold as a retail product, so you can't

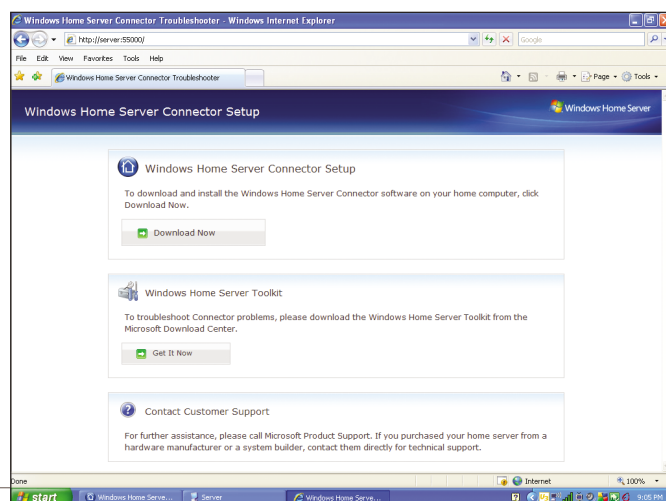


walk into your local electronics store and buy a boxed copy as you can with, say, Windows Vista or Microsoft Office. On the other hand, a number of online retailers, including Amazon.com, Buy.com, Newegg.com, and TigerDirect.com, will happily sell you an OEM (original equipment manufacturer)/System Builder copy of WHS for around \$100.

There are two caveats to be mindful of with OEM software, however. First, the OEM license agreement ties the software to the specific PC you install it on. This means you don't have the option to transfer it to a different system down the road, even if you delete it from the original. The second is that with any OEM copy of Windows, you're responsible for your own support, so you can't contact Microsoft if you run into any technical problems.

The second restriction may seem particularly daunting, but you can take WHS for a test drive to make sure it works on your intended system before spending any money. At tinyurl.com/nulp8j, you'll find a free trial version of WHS to download and use for up to 120 days. Once you've verified that the trial version runs successfully, you can go ahead and spring for the OEM

Once your WHS (Windows Home Server) is up and running, point your browser to it to download the Connector software.



version. (The OEM version needs to be set up more or less from scratch—there's no way to upgrade from the trial version—but it's arguably preferable to shelling out a hundred bucks for the WHS software only to find out that it won't run on your intended PC.)

The WHS trial download comes in the form of an ISO (International Organization for Standardization) disc image, so you'll need software capable of burning this type of file to a DVD. Windows XP and Vista can't do this, but most third-party disc-burning tools such as those from Nero and Roxio can, as can numerous free utilities such as Free ISO Burner (www.freeisoburner.com) or ImgBurn (www.imgburn.com).

Install Windows Home Server

Before installing WHS on your system, make sure the network cable is plugged in and that any external hard drives are disconnected (you can add them after installation). To install the software, you'll need to boot the system from the DVD; when first turned on, some systems will display a brief message giving you the option to do this. Others may prompt you to press a key (F8 or F12 are common options) to display a menu of bootable devices, but if your system offers neither of these options, you'll need to check the BIOS (Basic Input/Output System) for boot settings that instruct the system to boot from the DVD drive rather than the hard drive.

Even after choosing to boot from the DVD drive, you may still be prompted to "press any key" to boot from the disc. You'll know the system's booting from the WHS disc when you see a black screen with a progress bar at the bottom. Within a few minutes, a Welcome To Windows Home Server Setup wizard will greet you.

After you confirm the regional/language settings, the wizard will display

a list of hard drives it found. In the unlikely event that a system's hard drive doesn't appear on the list, it's probably because the drive requires a special driver, which you can install from a floppy diskette, CD/DVD, or USB flash drive by using the Load Drivers button. Incidentally, WHS will automatically carve 20GB from the

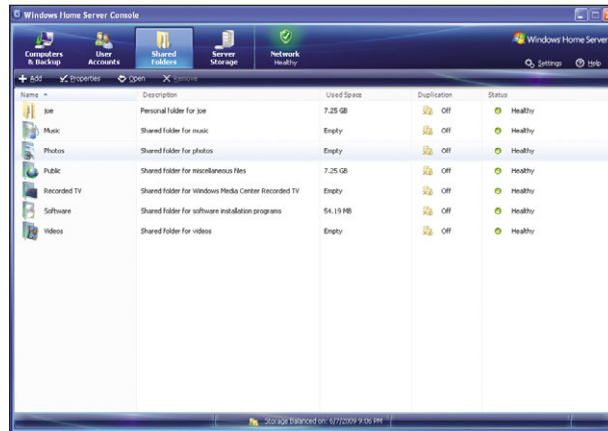
product key. The trial version doesn't automatically come with a key, but you can get one from Microsoft by visiting <https://connect.microsoft.com/WindowsHomeServer/ProductKeys> and logging on with a Windows Live ID. Entering the key (and activating the software after installation) will give you the full 120-day trial period.

Otherwise, you can skip the product key step and still use the Windows Home Server trial for 30 days (which may be long enough to put it through its paces before deciding to make your server permanent).

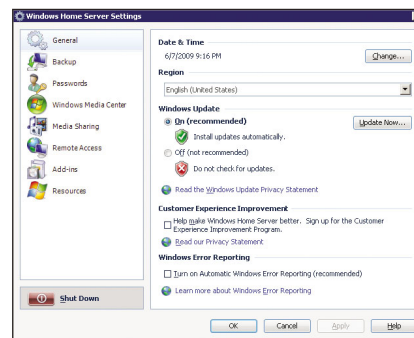
Next, the wizard will ask you to enter a name for your server and to acknowledge two reminders that any existing data on the system's hard drive(s) will be lost. When that's out of the way, click the Start button to begin the install process. It will take about an hour, and the system will reboot many times, but it runs unattended.

Eventually, you'll see a blue screen with a Welcome button; click it to proceed with a few additional configuration steps. First, you'll need to create a server password of at least seven characters that uses a mixture of uppercase/lowercase letters, numbers, and/or symbols, and you must also provide a password hint. Next, you'll have the option to turn Windows Update on to automatically keep WHS current with security patches and feature improvements, which is definitely a good idea. The last two steps will ask whether you want to participate in Microsoft's Customer Experience Improvement and Windows Error Reporting programs. These are both optional.

Finally, WHS will report that the installation is complete, and you'll see a caution page in Internet Explorer warning you not to use any of the server's programs directly. All further interaction with the server will be from a PC, so at this point, just click Start and then Log Off. (If you see a



WHS sets up shared folders for different categories of files; you can also create your own custom folders.



You can activate and configure various WHS features from the Settings menu.

system's first hard drive for the operating system and leave the rest of the space (plus the capacity of any other drives) available for your data.

The next step lets you select an installation type. When you're doing a first-time install, New Installation will be the only option, though subsequent install attempts will offer a reinstallation option, which we'll talk more about later. The next two screens will ask you to accept the WHS license agreement and enter a 25-character

message regarding activation, you can disregard it for now.)

Install The WHS Connector

Once the server is up and running, you need to install the Windows Home Server Connector software onto any PC you want to use with it. The Connector works with both WinXP and Vista (including 64-bit versions), and you can install it on up to 10 systems. Open Internet Explorer and point it to <http://server:55000> (replace “server” with the name you gave your server) and then click the Download Now button when the page appears.

The Connector install wizard will automatically find your server on the network and download the necessary software; then, after prompting you for the server password you created earlier, it will ask whether the Connector should update itself automatically and if the PC should be woken up from Sleep mode to be backed up (answering Yes for both is recommended).

The WHS Console

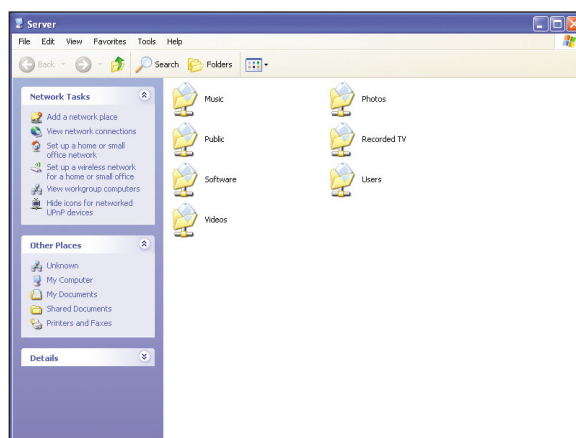
After the Connector is installed, you'll see a Shared Folders shortcut on your Desktop and a new “house” icon in your System Tray. Double-click the icon to open the WHS Console, which is where you can monitor and configure your server. We don't have the space to cover all of Windows Home Server's capabilities in detail, but here's an overview of the features available through the Console. (NOTE: The Console's online help is very thorough, and you can find even more information at tinyurl.com/3ys4pe.)

Computers & Backup. All PCs on your network that are running the Connector will appear on this list. Each one will report whether it's online as well as its backup status. WHS automatically tries to back up all PCs nightly between midnight and 6 a.m., but you can change this schedule and other backup options

from the Settings menu found near the upper-right corner of the Console.

User Accounts. You'll want to set up user accounts for each user that will need access to the server. (If you use the same name and password to log into a Windows PC, you will automatically be logged into WHS at the same time.) You can also turn on the Guest account, though it's not recommended if you want to keep files private.

Shared Folders. Here, you can manage both the shared folders WHS creates for different kinds of files (music, photos, video, etc.) as well as the personal folders that are set up for each user. You can also create your own



After you install the Connector software, your Desktop will include a shortcut to your server's shared folders.

custom folders and choose the level of access—Full, Read, None—individual users will have to a folder. If your WHS has more than one hard drive, you can turn on duplication for a folder, which will duplicate its contents to another drive so data isn't lost if one drive fails.

Server Storage. For a bird's-eye view of how much storage your WHS has and how it's being used, connect a new hard drive to your server. It will appear in this list, but it won't be used until you click Add to configure it as general server storage or backup storage (folder duplication).

Network Health. This button will display a green, yellow, or red icon (indicating Healthy, At Risk, or Critical), depending on the condition of your

server and PCs. When yellow or red, click the button to see a list of specific problems found and how to fix them.

Settings. From the aforementioned Settings button, you can also activate and configure additional WHS features, such as media sharing and remote access. You can also activate WHS from here, via the Resources menu option. (Remember, you'll need to activate the software to use either the trial or OEM versions of WHS for longer than 30 days.)

Incidentally, because all WHS configuration is done via the Console, there's no need to leave a keyboard, mouse, and monitor permanently connected to your server. (Store-bought WHS devices don't even come with them.) You should keep those peripherals handy, however, in case you need to reinstall the server software later.

Trial To OEM

The WHS installation process we've outlined here is the same whether you're installing the trial or OEM version of the software for the first time. When installing the trial version, you won't want to do too much in the way of custom configuration, because as men-

tioned earlier, if you install the OEM version on the same system later, you'll essentially have to reconfigure it again. (If you choose the reinstallation option instead of a new install, shared data folders will be preserved, but in either case, you'll have to recreate your user accounts and reconfigure any settings you changed from the default, and you'll also want to reinstall the Connector software on the PCs.)

There you have it. While your DIY Windows Home Server likely won't be as sleek and compact as a store-bought unit, it will give you most of the same capabilities for much less money. ■

BY JOSEPH MORAN

Notebook TV

The Ultimate Set-Top Box

For decades, TV viewers have asked for video on demand and channels à la carte instead of in cookie-cutter tiers. And for decades, cable and satellite TV companies have responded with a list of technical and, more importantly, licensing hurdles that would price these services out of reach.

Today, we're closer than ever to the dream of getting any programming any time we want it. As you've no doubt surmised, the Internet has a lot to do with it.

Moreover, many new notebook computers come with HDMI (High-Definition Multimedia Interface) output ports, which can send video and audio to just about any HDTV over an HDMI cable. If you have all of these things, plus reasonably fast broadband service (3Mbps [megabits per second] or better for best results), you're 10 minutes away from enjoying Internet TV on the big screen.

You probably already know about YouTube.com, but what other sources of online video are out there? You can catch free TV episodes, old and new, on Hulu.com, SciFi.com, and other sites, sometimes without commercial interruptions. Pay services such as Netflix.com and CinemaNow.com let you stream a growing number of movies to your PC or compatible device (more on that later). There's video news on CNN.com, sports on ESPN.com, and so on. It begs the question: Who needs cable or satellite?

And then there's all the user-generated stuff. Even more intriguing are high-quality fan films that, for copyright and financial reasons, couldn't realistically be distributed any other way than online for free. Some examples pay homage to Star Trek (StarTrekNewVoyages.com), Star Wars (ReignOfThe



Fallen.com), and The Lord of the Rings (TheHuntForGollum.com).

Assuming your Internet connection is speedy enough to avoid stuttering playback, streaming video quality ranges from pretty decent on the sites run by major networks and movie studios to so-so on most sites hosting user-generated content. Moreover, software such as the DownloadHelper (www.downloadhelper.net) add-on for Firefox lets you save streaming video as a file, even with clips that are normally unrecordable, such as those encoded in the Flash (FLV) format used by YouTube and other sites. In fact, the recorded videos playing back from your hard drive may be smoother and less choppy than the ones you stream over a live wireless connection. In other words, who needs a TiVo, DVD recorder, or VCR?

Notes

If your laptop cooperates, setting up Internet TV can be a piece of cake.

Your laptop can help your HDTV tap into a new world of streaming entertainment.

Ideally, you'll connect your laptop to your HDTV with an HDMI cable, but you can also use other video and audio cables as long as both devices support them. If you own a home-theater sound system with HDMI support, you might choose to attach the laptop to one of its inputs instead and route the video from the receiver to the TV. Another option is to send the laptop's audio to the receiver and its video to the TV, although sound synchronization may be a problem.

Besides having fast Internet access, your laptop will need to be reasonably good at handling multimedia. Fortunately, most current mobile graphics adapters are easily up to the task. A dual-core or better processor will help smooth things out, even while





The ideal cables for Internet TV are HDMI (to send video and audio to your HDTV) and 100Mbps or faster Ethernet (for the smoothest, most reliable Internet service).

Depending on your home-theater equipment, you can plug the HDMI cable into your HDTV or your audio receiver.



antivirus and other security software are using system resources to protect your data.

A simple way to ensure that your notebook can handle even high-definition download streams is to buy one with a BD (Blu-ray Disc) player installed. Not only will your laptop be able to play an additional role as a BD player, but it will also have all the video processing horsepower you'll need, straight from the factory. If you choose this route, opt for a GPU (graphics processing unit) that can natively accelerate the decoding of high-definition video formats such as H.264/MPEG-4 (Moving Picture Experts Group-4). This feature will mean that you can save money with a lighter CPU, as the processor won't have to work as hard.

On the other hand, there are some drawbacks to "notebook TV" that you should keep in mind. Very few laptops come with remote controls, so it may be awkward for you to "change the channel," so to speak. In many cases, you'll need to move the laptop's mouse pointer and click objects while keeping your eyes on your HDTV, which takes some getting used to. Also, if multiple people in your household (or your neighborhood, if you use a cable modem) are all using the Internet at the same time, especially for large downloads, your video stream may hiccup or freeze.

Setup

For our system, we used an HP G60t laptop with a dual-core 2GHz

Intel T6400 Core 2 Duo processor, Intel mobile GMA (Graphics Media Accelerator) 4500MHD integrated graphics, 4GB of RAM, and 64-bit Windows Vista. Our TV was a 46-inch Samsung LN-T4681F LCD with LED (light-emitting diode) backlighting.

As for broadband, we used a 6Mbps DSL (Digital Subscriber Line) connection. Our 54Mbps, 802.11g wireless router had recently died, however. We feared that its temporary replacement, an old 11Mbps 802.11b access point linked to a 100Mbps Ethernet router, might have limited our reception despite being theoretically faster than our broadband service.

Cables. In order to help our Internet TV experience look and sound as good as possible, we decided to run a 100Mbps Ethernet cable connection from our substitute router to our laptop's LAN (local-area network) port. If it would be difficult for you to run a cable from your router to your notebook this way, consider using a high-speed wireless connection with an 802.11 Draft N router (your notebook's wireless adapter would need to

be 802.11 Draft N-compatible, too) or 802.11g in a pinch. An attractive alternative is a powerline networking system such as one from Netgear (www.netgear.com) or Linksys (www.linksysbycisco.com).

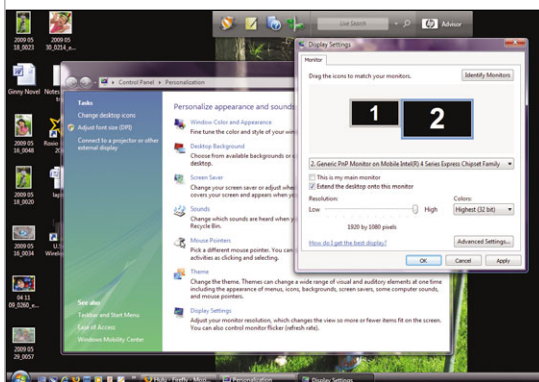
If you use a wired connection, remember to turn off your notebook's wireless adapter. If your laptop does not have a keystroke command for this, click Vista's Start button and open the Control Panel. Select Network And Internet, click Network And Sharing Center, and then select the Disconnect link next to the wireless card's entry.

We plugged our Ethernet cable into the notebook's LAN port and the other end into our router. Vista reconnected to the Internet automatically. (For details on how to set up a wired network connection, subscribers can refer to "Making Connections" on page 44 of the April 2008 issue.)

Now connect an HDMI cable from the laptop's output to an input on your HDTV or audio receiver. Turn on each device.

Display Settings. Next, it's time to change your laptop's graphics settings to send video to the HDTV. There are several ways to do this in Vista;

Adjust Windows' Display Settings to extend the Desktop onto the TV screen at its native resolution. Next, press the HDTV's or audio receiver's input select button until the laptop's video appears on the TV screen.



however, we recommend spreading the Desktop to the HDTV in a dual-monitor setup. This way, you'll be able to use the laptop's screen to adjust video and audio settings, among other things, while you watch programs and movies on the TV.

In Vista, right-click a blank part of the Desktop. Choose Personalize and Display Settings. Click screen number 2, select Extend The Desktop Onto This Monitor, click Apply, and click Yes. Next, press the input select button on your HDTV's or receiver's remote until you see your laptop's Desktop wallpaper on the TV screen.

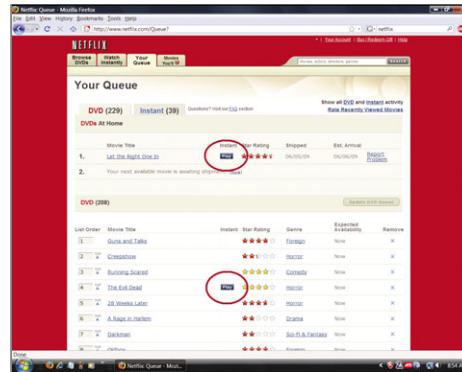
(If the HDMI port isn't working, try enabling it in the BIOS [Basic Input/Output System] Setup by pressing the indicated key, such as DELETE or F2, during your PC's bootup. Find and enable the HDMI port and then save your changes and exit.)

Next, move the resolution slider to your HDTV's native resolution, such as 1,920 x 1,080 for a 1080i/p set or 1,280 x 720 or 1,366 x 768 for a 720p model. Click Apply. If everything looks OK on your TV and notebook screen, click Yes and OK.

While you're in the Personalization menu, turn off anything that could interrupt your TV watching. Click Screen Saver and then change the drop-down menu to (None). Next, click Change Power Settings and then select High Performance. Close the window and then click Apply and OK. You can close the Personalization window, too.

Channel surf. Open your browser and then click its Restore Down button at the upper right of the window (between the Minimize and Close buttons). Click and drag the window offscreen to the right, even if your HDTV is physically located to the left of your laptop. When the browser window appears on the TV screen, click its Maximize button. Now, you're ready to browse for online video.

Many video-streaming sites have a playback window button that enables a higher-resolution picture, such as



All Netflix subscriptions include at least some monthly hours of movie streaming. In your main account queue, look for films with blue Play buttons.

YouTube's HD icon and Hulu's 480p button. If so, click it when you start to watch a video. Next, click the Full Screen button to expand the clip to fit your TV. You might even be able to turn on subtitles, depending on the site and content. For example, click Hulu's CC button and then click English for subtitles on programs that are closed-captioned.

If the notebook's bright screen proves too distracting under dark viewing conditions, you might turn the laptop around or drop a sheet of black construction paper in front of the display. (Closing the notebook may put it into Standby mode, which will disrupt your streaming.)

Netflix

If you're a Netflix subscriber, you already have access to the company's streaming service. The number of hours of video you can stream each month depends on your Netflix service plan (your Internet service tier may have a monthly bandwidth maximum, too). Our Netflix plan turned out to have unlimited hours, so you know what we did as soon as we finished this article.

Certain CE devices from Samsung, LG, TiVo, Roku, and Microsoft (the Xbox 360) are compatible with Netflix downloads. However, you can also use your PC to watch Netflix

movies instantly as long as you have Microsoft's Silverlight installed. If not, click Start, (All) Programs, and Windows Update to get it; it's in the Optional downloads.

Next, go to Netflix.com and log into your account, if necessary. You'll need to access your main account to stream a download. It won't work if you're using a different account profile, if you made any, such as to keep the movie queues of each of your family members separate.

If you don't see a Watch Instantly tab at the top of the Netflix page, you're not in the main account at the moment. Click your account name at the upper right and then choose the main account from the drop-down menu. Enter the password and then click Your Queue.

Certain movies in the queue will have blue Play icons; these are available for instant streaming. Netflix recommends at least a 3Mbps Internet connection for best results. Click Play on a movie you would like to see. When a Silverlight window pops up on either screen, click Enable to load the necessary content protection. After the movie buffers for a few seconds, it will start to play. Click Full Screen and sit back to enjoy the show.

I Stream, You Stream

On the better sites, we found video quality just a step below upconverted DVD. It was a little fuzzy and occasionally blocky on solid color gradients, but it was unquestionably watchable from a couch 9 feet away. There were occasional minor hesitations on every site we tried, but they were few and far between.

Now that you've connected your laptop to your home-theater equipment, don't forget that you can also enjoy PC video gaming on the big screen, not to mention Internet radio on your sound system. There might just be something to this World Wide Web thing after all. ■

BY MARTY SEMS

Many of our readers come across fast, easy ways to solve a problem or accomplish a task. Well, we'd like to hear about it! If you have a great tip you'd like to share, email us at readertips@smartcomputing.com. If we print your tip, we'll send you a free *Smart Computing* T-shirt. You'll be the envy of all (well, some) of your friends.

Please include your first name, last name, and address so that we can give you credit if we print your tip. (And so that we can send your T-shirt to you, of course.) Please limit your tip to 200 words or fewer. Not all tips received will be printed, and tips may be edited for length and clarity.



Short & Simple Tips To Make Things Easier

Create A File List

Want a quick and easy way to make a record of the files in a particular folder? Select all the files in the folder (press CTRL-A) and then right-click any file. Choose Send To and select Mail Recipient, which will open your default email client. Your email client produces a list of the files in the body of the email. Then, you can copy and paste the list to a word processing application or any other application you choose.

Alfred M., Inverness, Fla.

Organize Your Documentation

When I ran into PC problems, I never seemed to be able to locate the papers or booklets for particular software or hardware. To organize the material, I bought a spiral binder with plastic pockets, and in each pocket, I place the individual manuals and other pertinent information. You can also include the hardware's or software's installation discs inside the pockets. For the games I play, I created a separate folder for my notes and booklets—no more lost information.

Suzann G.

Common Keyboard Shortcuts For Web Browsers

You have a lot of choices when it comes to browsers these days. Although each flavor has some special features, the most popular browsers (such as Internet Explorer, Google Chrome, Apple Safari, and Opera) share some common keyboard commands. Here are just a few keyboard shortcuts that can help expedite your Web browsing on the popular browsers.

To refresh the Web page, press F5, and if you want to jump to the Address Bar, press F6 (this shortcut doesn't work in Opera). You can browse your recently visited pages by pressing CTRL-H, bookmark

a page by pressing CTRL-D, and display your bookmarks by pressing CTRL-B (this one doesn't work in Safari). If you want to open a new tab, press CTRL-T, or you can cycle through the tabs by pressing CTRL-TAB. Press CTRL-W to close the tab currently being viewed.

Shar F., Minneapolis, Minn.

Email-Sized Images

If you're looking to reduce the size of a photo for the purposes of email, the Paint application included with Windows XP and Windows Vista is perfect. Paint can be found in the Accessories menu (click Start, All Programs, Accessories, and Paint). Once you open the file in Paint, select the Image menu and click Stretch/Skew. In the Stretch section, reduce the percentages—make sure to use the same proportion—in the Horizontal and Vertical fields. Click OK and check the image's physical and file size. If the size isn't what you want, click the Edit menu, select Undo, and repeat the resize steps as needed. Rather than saving over the original image, click the File menu, select Save As, and append the original file name with an "em" to indicate that it's an email-sized photo.



Sheila M., Atlanta, Ga.

Start Up Your Brower Faster

I have a tip that builds upon the "Simplify Your Home Page For Speed" tip in the March issue of *Smart Computing*, which suggested that you select a page without a lot of graphics as your home page. If you don't want to wait for anything to open or load when you start your browser, make Blank Page (about:blank) your home page. I've recommended this to several friends and co-workers, and they were grateful for the advice.

Kent S., Lincoln, Neb.

It can sometimes be annoying to resize a window each time you open an application in Windows Vista.

Unprintable PDF Files

Occasionally, I receive emails with PDF (Portable Document Format) attachments that I would like to print out. In some cases, the File menu does not include a Print option, but there's a Copy option (it's also in File menu). If so, select Copy and then paste the text into a blank word processing document, and you can print off a copy of the information.



Chuck F., Atlanta, Ga.
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Keep Your Window Size

It can sometimes be annoying to resize a window each time you open an application in Windows Vista. If you have a preferred size and location, resize the application to the desired dimension when it's in the Restore Down mode and press F11 before closing the window. (Restore Down mode is the middle option in the upper-right corner of a window between the Minimize and Close options.) Note that this command does make the window full-screen, but it also keeps the program in the same dimension you had before it maximized. The next time you open the application, Windows Vista will open the application at your preferred dimension. You can accomplish the same thing in Windows XP by holding the CTRL key when closing a window.

Dieter S., Vineland, Ontario
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Troubleshooting Tip

Before you begin troubleshooting a problem (and possibly changing important settings), it's a good idea to set a restore point using Windows' System Restore. I find that it's handy to create a shortcut to System Restore on your Desktop because it helps me remember to run it before I make changes to my computer. To add System Restore to your Desktop, click the Start button,

choose All Programs, select Accessories, select System Tools, and right-click System Restore. Select Send To and Desktop (Create Shortcut), and now you can run System Restore from your Desktop.

Barbara S., Birmingham, Ala.
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Copy Your CDs

I used to have trouble making audio CDs that would play in my older electronics. After doing some research in the *Smart Computing* archives, I tried ripping CDs into WAV files and burning the WAV files onto a CD. It works perfectly with CD-R (CD-recordable) media, but the audio files may not play when you burn them to CD-RW (CD-rewriteable) media.

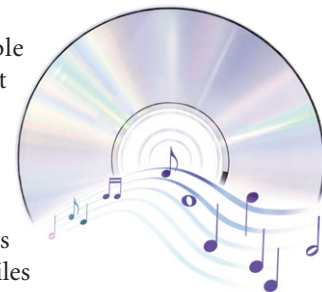
Now, I can make copies of my CDs, and the originals won't get scratched or otherwise damaged from being carried around. I also like that I can organize the songs in the order I prefer. You'll need a media player, such as Winamp (www.winamp.com), that lets you select the type of file you want to save and supports WAV files and CD-Rs.

Cynthia N., Ada, Okla.
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Save Tax Documents In Digital Form

Rather than filing away the paper copies of my annual income tax, which can take up a lot of room in the safe deposit box, I scan the documents and save them to a folder on my PC. After I file the returns in April, I copy the documents, including the tax return itself, to a CD-R and place the disc in the safe deposit box. To simplify the work needed in April, I scan each document, such as 1099 forms and mortgage interest statements, as soon as I receive them.

Bill W., Vero Beach, Fla.



(Totally Legal) Performance Enhancement For Your Mac

CheckIt 2 System Performance Suite

Even Macs need a little maintenance from time to time. The CheckIt 2 System Performance Suite has a whole heap of tools for maintaining, optimizing, securing, and otherwise benefitting the health of your computer.

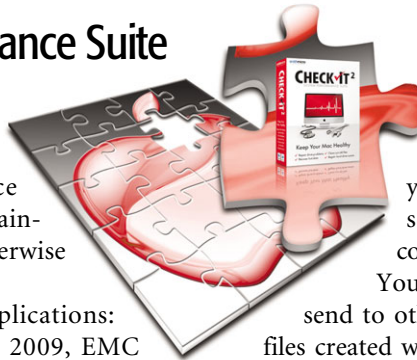
The suite includes five separate applications: Spring Cleaning 10, StuffIt Standard 2009, EMC Retrospect Express, ExecutiveSync, and TechTool Platinum 4.6.2. The whole shebang is rather time-consuming to set up, as you have to install all five programs separately—a process that includes a few restarts.

But once you get everything installed, the suite is easy to use. Without further ado and with space limitations in mind, here is a summary of the five tools.

Spring Cleaning 10. If Spring Cleaning 10 sounds familiar, it's possibly because I covered it as a standalone product several months ago in this very column. Is it a coincidence that it's turned up again in a suite of ideal performance applications? Nope. It's useful software.

Spring Cleaning 10 itself is sort of a suite of applications; it has 45 different actions you can perform to keep your Mac humming along smoothly. It will locate and remove corrupt files and duplicate files and trim down unnecessary code in applications.

All of the tools are organized into five categories: Clean Up, Maintain, Exclude, Storage, Restore, and Schedule. You can just imagine all the things this application can do.



StuffIt Standard 2009. You can sum up StuffIt's capabilities in a nutshell: It allows you to create compressed and encrypted files, send the files via email or FTP, and expand compressed files with drag-and-drop simplicity. You can create ZIP, TAR, and StuffIt archives to send to others, and StuffIt Standard 2009 can expand files created with more than 30 types of compression, ensuring that whatever compressed files you find, the application will be able to expand them.

EMC Retrospect Express. When the Retrospect Express comes to town, it backs up everything on your system. Designed for easy setup and scheduling, Retrospect Express is a tool to back up, restore, duplicate, and/or archive your data. You can also automate each of the aforementioned tasks manually or with EasyScript.

A setup wizard will guide you through a handful of simple steps to get things going, and you can choose to make backups to virtually any type of storage media available, including tapes and online storage.

ExecutiveSync. As attentive readers may have surmised from the name, ExecutiveSync is a tool to synchronize your files that are stored in different locations.

The level of detail available for setting up synchronized folders is impressive. You can select a local folder and a remote folder to sync together, the type of synchronization (such as which folder replaces the other), any files you want to exclude, and much more. You can also set a schedule for automatic synchronization.

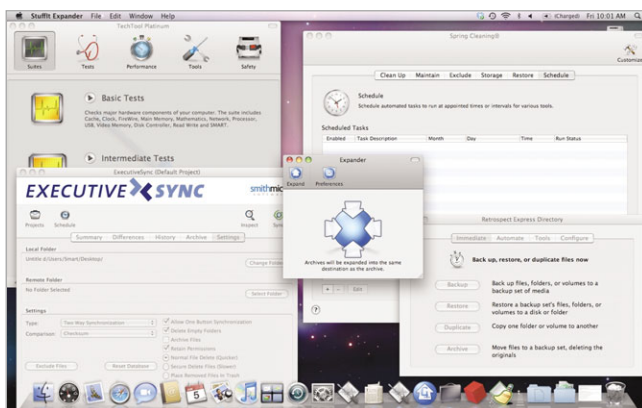
TechTool Platinum 4.6.2. TechTool Platinum is a hard drive utility for Macs, and it has many facets. It's quite simple to use, with a clean interface that displays your various testing options.

You can run suites of tests (Basic, Intermediate, and Advanced), select specific tests by clicking the Tests tab and choosing from various options, or perform maintenance or optimization on all your hard drives and partitions.

Other features include the ability to create emergency partitions in case of a crash, recover or delete data, calibrate audio, and perform automatic diagnostics.

Sweet Suite. Though the capabilities of the applications in the CheckIt System Performance Suite 2 range widely, they all contribute to the same goal: keeping your Mac happy, healthy, secure, and swift. ■

Product Info
CheckIt 2 System
Performance Suite
\$99.99
Smith Micro
(949) 362-5800
www.smithmicro.com



The CheckIt 2 System Performance Suite gives you myriad ways to manage your computer.

Mac Corner

Vista Crosses The Aisle



Macs all ship with Boot Camp, one of the most useful utilities known to the computing world—at least for Mac users. Boot Camp allows you to create a partition on your hard drive where you can install a Windows operating system. Thus, if you spring for a copy of Windows XP or Vista, you have the freedom to boot into either Mac OS X or Windows, which is a tremendous benefit to anyone who needs to use Windows-only programs or only possesses a Windows version of a piece of software.

In this article, we're focusing on how to install Windows Vista on a Mac using Boot Camp. All you need is a Vista installation disc and a few minutes of your time. Note that you can't install Vista 64-bit unless you have a Mac Pro or MacBook Pro made in

early 2008 or later, so you might need to use a 32-bit version of Vista.

Preparation

You must have Mac OS X v10.5 or later to use Boot Camp. If you're not sure if your computer is up-to-date, click the Apple menu and select Software Update. The computer will check for any updates; if it finds any, click Install and wait for the computer to restart, if any of the updates require it. (Make

Before you use Boot Camp, visit support.apple.com/downloads and make sure you have the latest firmware updates for your Mac.

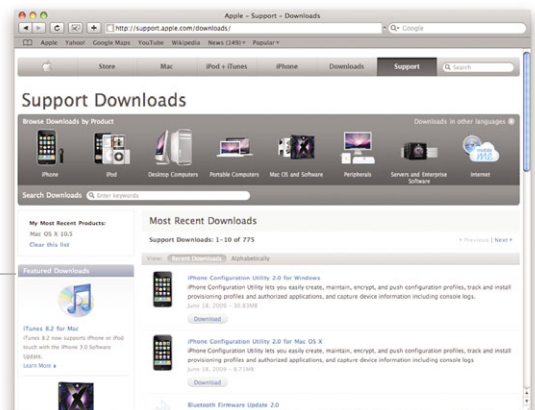
sure you're connected to the Internet at this time.)

Next, make sure your firmware is up-to-date. Go to support.apple.com/downloads. Click the Mac icon that corresponds to your type of computer under Support Downloads; for example, click Portable Computers and then MacBook Pro if you have a MacBook Pro. Download and install any recent firmware updates needed to bring your Mac up to the latest version.

Or if you'd rather install multiple updates at one time, look under Featured Downloads on the left-hand side of the screen. There may be a Combo Update available for your computer, which will let you install many updates simultaneously. If you find such an update, click it and click Download when the page loads.

Once the download is complete, you'll see an installation wizard. Click Continue on the Welcome screen, Important Information screen, and Software License agreement screen. When prompted, click Agree to assent to the terms of the software agreement. On the Standard Install screen, check to be sure you'll be installing the updates to the correct hard drive and click Install. If a window pops up about needing to restart, click Continue Installation. When you receive the Install Succeeded message, click Restart. After the computer reboots, you'll be ready to begin.

Back up all your data and applications before performing any operations

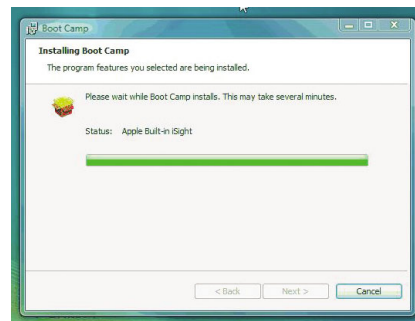




Boot Camp will allocate 5GB to the Windows installation by default, but make sure you allow at least 20GB for a Vista installation.



After creating a Windows partition, insert the Windows Vista installation disc and click Start Installation.



After installing Windows, you also need to install Mac drivers using your Mac OS X installation disc.

pertaining to your hard drive. There's no reason to think that your data is in danger of being deleted, but you can never be too careful in these situations.

Once you've backed everything up, open Boot Camp Assistant: First, press Command-N to bring up a new Finder window. Click Applications and then locate and double-click Utilities. Locate the Boot Camp Assistant and double-click it.

It's not a bad idea to print the installation guide, so when the Boot Camp Assistant window appears, feel free to click Print Installation & Setup Guide. This guide is a useful document to have on hand while you're working with Boot Camp. When you've finished printing, click Continue.

Creating The Windows Partition

On the Create A Partition For Windows screen, you need to select a partition size for your Windows installation. By default, your Mac will allocate 5GB for Windows; this is not enough space for Vista. You need at least 15GB of space for Vista alone. Bear in mind that you also need to leave space for the applications you'll install as well as the files you'll store on this partition, so reserve 20GB at the very least when partitioning your hard drive.

You can drag the divider separating the two partitions to resize them any way you wish. You can also click the Divide Equally button to make both partitions the same size or

click Use 32GB to make the Windows partition 32GB.

Make your selection and click Partition to perform the operation. When the partitioning is complete, you'll be prompted to insert your Windows installation disc and click Start Installation. The computer will restart, and then you can just follow the directions for installing Windows. (If using a laptop, make sure it's plugged in during the installation process.)

Select your preferred language, time and currency format, and keyboard or input method. (Select US for the latter.) Click Next and click Install Now on the next screen. On the next screen, enter the product key and click Next and, on the Please Read The License Terms page, check the I Accept The License Terms box and click Next. On the Which Type Of Installation Do You Want? screen, click Custom (Advanced). On the next screen, select the partition on which you want to install Windows. (*NOTE: The partition*

created expressly for the Windows installation by Boot Camp will have "Boot Camp" in the name.)

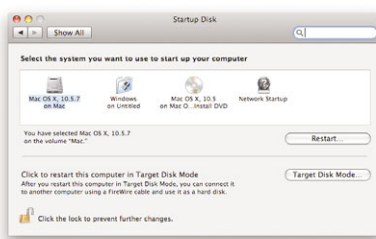
The partition may not be formatted for a Windows installation; if this is the case, a warning will be present with a yellow caution icon. Click Drive Options (Advanced) and click Format. When the dialog box appears, click OK. When the operation is complete, click Next. Now you must wait while Windows installs. Your computer will restart a few times during this process.

After a few restarts, the Set Up Windows screen will appear. Enter a username and password (if you desire to password-protect your account) and click Next. On the next screen, name your computer, choose a Desktop background (which you can easily change later on if you wish), and click Next.

On the Help Protect Windows Automatically screen, click Use Recommended Settings. On the next screen, set the time and date and click Next when you're done. Click Start on the Thank You screen and wait for Windows to start for the first time.

Install Drivers

In order to complete the Windows installation, you must install drivers to support all of your Mac hardware. Otherwise, you may find that you end up with issues concerning graphics, networking, audio, and even the keyboard and mouse. Not to worry, installing these drivers is a simple



After Windows is installed, set the default operating system so your computer boots to your preferred OS every time.

process, and they're all on the Mac OS X installation disc.

If you haven't already, eject the Windows Vista installation disc. Note that you must do this via Windows. Go to Start and Computer, select the optical drive (usually the D: drive), and click the Eject button at the top of the window. *After* you've installed the Mac drivers, you'll be able to use the Eject button on your Mac keyboard (if it has one).

Insert the Mac OS X installation disc. When the AutoPlay window appears, click Run Setup.exe. (If AutoPlay is off, simply navigate to the optical drive under Computer as instructed above and double-click the icon.) When the User Account Control window appears, click Continue. The Boot Camp window will appear; click Next. Accept the license terms agreement and click Next. Under Choose Additional Features And Settings, be sure the Apple Software Update For Windows box is checked and click Install.

The Windows installer will run—this process takes a few minutes. When the process is complete, click Finish and then restart your computer. Eject the Mac OS X installation disc.

Now, not only are all your drivers updated so that Windows will work with your Mac's hardware, but this process also installs Boot Camp so you can access and control it from Windows.

How To Use It

Assuming you'll be primarily using the Mac OS X operating system, you need to be aware of how to access your new Windows installation. And now that you have two bootable partitions, you also need to set the default operating system.

You can set the default operating system in either Windows or Mac. To do so in Windows, click the Boot Camp icon on the system tray and click Boot Camp Control Panel. When the User Account Control window appears, click Continue. On the Startup Disk tab, select the drive

you want to use as a default. Presumably, you'll want to select Mac. Click OK to close the window.

To set the default operating system from the Mac installation, click the Apple menu and click System Preferences. Under the System area, click Startup Disk. When the Startup Disk window appears, you'll see your options for selecting the system you want to use to start up your computer: Mac OS X, Windows, or Network Startup. Click Mac OS X and close the window.

To access Vista while using Mac OS X, you must restart the computer. As soon as the startup process begins, press and hold the OPTION key. In short order, you'll be given the option of choosing between booting to Mac OS X or Windows Vista. Select the Windows option and click the arrow icon beneath it. When you want to go back to using Mac OS X, just restart the computer, and it will automatically boot into Mac OS X. ■

BY SETH COLANER

Ack! I Already Have A Second Partition

When attempting to use Boot Camp, you may encounter an unforeseen issue that we had. If you already have more than one partition on your Mac hard drive, Boot Camp won't work. To solve the problem, you must erase and reformat any additional partitions.

If you're fortunate, you may be able to fix this issue from Boot Camp itself. Launch Boot Camp Assistant, click Continue, select the Create Or Remove A Windows Partition radio button, click Continue, and click Restore. This will erase everything on the partition containing Windows and remerge your partitions into a single Mac partition. You may have to enter an administrator password to proceed. When the operation is complete, click Quit. (The next time you restart your computer, make sure you press and hold OPTION so you can select your hard drive as the bootable device.)

If instead of the above option Boot Camp gives you an error message (such as This Startup Disk Is Not Supported) when you attempt to use it, you'll have to use your original Mac OS X installation DVD. Insert the disc and restart the computer. As the computer reboots, press and hold the OPTION key. When given the option of booting from the computer's hard drive or the installation DVD, choose the latter and click the arrow icon below it.

When the Mac boots to the installation screen, click the Utilities menu and then click Disk Utility. When the Disk Utility window appears, select the partition you want to remove from the left side of the window and click the Erase tab. Under the Volume Format drop-down menu, select MS-DOS (FAT). Click Erase. This action will erase all the data on the partition and reformat it.

Then, click the Mac OS X Installer menu and select Quit Mac OS X Installer. When a new dialog box appears, click Startup Disk and select your computer's hard drive from the resulting menu (as opposed to the installation DVD). Click Restart, click Restart again when a window appears, and wait for the computer to shut down.

When the computer reboots, eject the Mac OS X installation DVD and insert the Windows installation disc. Restart the computer and hold down the OPTION key as it reboots, as before. Select the Windows installation DVD when given the option.

Wait as Windows loads and then follow the on-screen directions to proceed through setup. When you get to the screen where you can select where to install Windows, select the partition you just reformatted.

You'll have to reformat it to NTFS at this time. With the partition highlighted, click Format and click OK. When the reformatting is complete, click Next and finish installing Windows. ■

Web Tips

Enhance Your Time Online

Identify Online Scams

Problem: I'm wary of Internet and email scams, but I'm not confident I can always tell the difference between what is real and what is a hoax.

Solution: There are plenty of helpful online resources that can make that call for you, one of which is Hoax-Slayer (www.hoax-slayer.com). Hoax-Slayer is committed to "debunking email hoaxes, thwarting Internet scammers, combating spam, and educating Web users about email and Internet security issues." If you believe you have received suspicious emails or you've come across questionable Web sites that could be running scams, you can search Hoax-Slayer's database of articles describing bad advice emails, email lottery scams, bogus warnings, Internet dating scams, and so on. Snopes.com also identifies dubious Web activity, such as questionable email forwards, hoaxes, and potential viral threats. Consult the Inboxer Rebellion and Computers sections for more information.

Compare Healthcare Facilities

Problem: How do I compare available healthcare services in my area?

Solution: Searching for new healthcare facilities can be a

time-consuming and overwhelming task, especially if you've moved to a new city or state. Let UCompare-HealthCare (www.uchcomparehealthcare.com) do the hard part for you. All you need to do is enter your search queries. You have the option to search for a specific doctor, hospital, nursing home, fertility center, or mammography center. UCompare-HealthCare provides free reports for each service; some results include the facility's area of specialty, patient safety measures, total charges, demographic information, and staffing levels.

Videos For Kids

Problem: I want to watch online videos with my child, but I fear that inappropriate content might appear.

Solution: You won't have to worry about inappropriate videos at Totlol (www.totlol.com), a video Web site for children and parents.

Totlol is parent-driven, featuring videos that are "submitted, screened, and rated by parents." There's an abundance of animal-based videos, song videos, and generally cute videos for toddlers or young children. When you join as a member, you're able to sort your video collections by a variety of categories or help find and submit fun videos for Totlol. (At the time of this writing, membership was free. However, according to the Totlol Web site, membership fees may be enforced by the time you read this.)

Hotspot Finder

Problem: I like the convenience of wireless hotspots while I travel, but I don't want to pay a fee for Wi-Fi.

Solution: Free-hotspot.com will help you solve this problem by locating thousands of free wireless access points in countries around the globe. Click the Find Free

HotSpots tab, and a Google-powered map will appear; enter a city and country in the search field to pinpoint nearby hotspots. Or, you can simply search on the home page in the Find Free HotSpots search box. Click the Using Free HotSpots tab and read the Before You Start section prior to wirelessly connecting via a free hotspot. Here, you can follow three steps to guarantee a reliable wireless connection: check your laptop or PDA (personal digital assistant), check the drivers and settings on either device, and configure your wireless settings.

Veterinary Assistance

Problem: My pet has some strange symptoms, but I don't want to subject him to an unnecessary pet visit.

Solution: You can take advantage of online veterinary diagnosis at Vet Help Direct (www.vethelpdirect.com) before you consider taking your pet to the local vet. For instance, if your cat has a poor appetite, click the Cats section, which will take you to symptom selection. The next series of steps will ask you questions regarding the cat's behavior and activity. After you answer each inquiry, Vet Help Direct will provide a Priority Rating informing you of the urgency of a vet visit, whether high or low. Vet Help Direct provides advice about unusual domestic animals as well, such as lizards, snakes, and backyard poultry. ■

BY JOANNA SAFFORD



Totlol compiles a family-friendly collection of videos from YouTube for children and their parents to enjoy.

Check Out The Tech Support Center!

The Tech Support Center at SmartComputing.com has always been *the* place to find helpful information for all of your computing troubles. Check out the Networking & Communications area to learn how to install and configure your home network properly. You'll find out how to set up your wireless network, fix wireless connection problems, and much more. Be sure to take a look at the Backups & Data Recovery section, as well. This area contains articles that explain the ins and outs of creating system backups, recovering lost data, and other backup basics. Check out these articles at SmartComputing.com's Tech Support Center today!

- 1 Go to SmartComputing.com and click the Tech Support Center link.
- 2 Click Backups & Data Recovery or Networking & Communications.
- 3 Click View ALL Backup & Data Recovery Articles or View ALL Networking & Communications Articles to view articles within those departments.

Be sure to store all of your articles and information in your Personal Library to keep for future reference. Simply log in, and when you find an article you would like to keep, click the Add To My Personal Library link at the top of the page. Create as many folders as you like to keep your information organized and accessible.

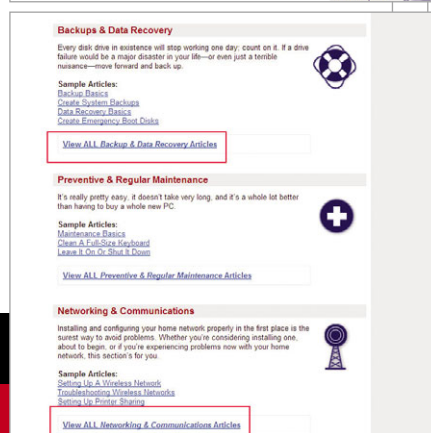
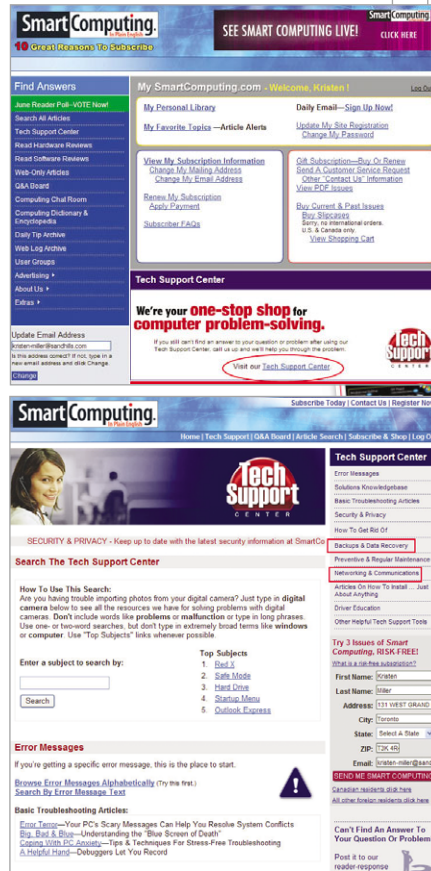
From Smart Computing's Dictionary

quarantine

To place a file that is infected with a virus or otherwise poses a threat in a directory where it cannot do any harm. Functions that divert threatening files to a quarantined directory are typically part of antivirus software.

Coming Attractions

Check out the Next Month's Articles Online Now section at SmartComputing.com to get a snapshot of what's coming up in the next issue of *Smart Computing*.



The Reviews Are In

Read our hardware and software reviews for detailed information on products, so you'll know what you're getting before you buy. You'll find information on everything from digital audio players to the latest operating system.

Now Playing

You can browse the latest issue of *Smart Computing* online. Just click the image of the current issue at www.smartcomputing.com to get started.

Find It Online

Decorate Your Digs

Traditional Home

www.traditionalhome.com

The Traditional Home Web site, based on the magazine, offers a little of everything regarding your home life, with articles about decorating and design, food and entertainment, outdoor living, and travel. You can find ideas for every room in your house. It also offers cultural and geographical food and gardening tips. The Antiques & Collecting section provides information about how to bargain hunt in antique stores to find something that gives a room in your house a new unique look. With ideas and inspiration from all over the United States and the world, Traditional Home is a must-see Web site for homeowners. Traditional Home also offers interesting articles about particular homeowners and unique homes.

Southern Living Home & Garden

www.southernliving.com/home-garden
Whether you're from Mississippi or Minnesota, Southern Living's Home And Garden section has an idea for you to use in your home. There are hundreds of photographs from *Southern Living* magazine for you to scan for ideas and inspiration. In addition to its vast collection of inspiring home designs, Southern Living Home And Garden offers designs for the holidays and for entertaining. You can make the outside of your home just as invigorating as the inside with the Gardens section that features everything from plant growing to patio furniture arranging.



So, you don't have to be a southern belle to incorporate a southern interior decorating style.

HomePortfolio

www.homeportfolio.com

HomePortfolio, which concentrates on interior design, not only gives you images and examples for inspiration, but it also gives you product brands and MSRPs so you can estimate how much your home improvements will cost. It offers information about multiple designers and home furnishing manufacturers as well as different price points for all types of buyers. The styles are mostly traditional and contemporary but not exclusively, and it offers ideas for several

shades of color for comparing. For home builders and renovators, HomePortfolio has pictures and information for an array of counters, sinks, floors, and other products to gain ideas for your home projects. Additionally, HomePortfolio offers environmentally friendly ideas and products for those interested in green living.

HGTV.com

www.hgtv.com

If you've been wishing you could get your house to look like something designed on HGTV (Home & Garden Television), you can go to the HGTV Web site and find out how the professionals do it. This site has decorating ideas, home improvement how-tos, organizing tips, and other information you get from watching HGTV shows. It

also provides budget-friendly projects for your house, both inside and outside. Tools, such as the color inspiration wheel located under the Decorating section, help guide you to articles that relate closely to what you want to accomplish with your projects. When you click on a color, you will see examples of rooms decorated using that color. In addition to home improvement and decorating, HGTV.com offers ideas for crafts and for making your home more environmentally friendly.

DoItYourself.com

www.doityourself.com

Putting your own personal touch on the upgrades to your house can be rewarding and fun. At DoItYourself.com, you can find tips on how to do just about anything around your house, such as installing electrical wiring for lighting, fixing appliances, and decorating. In addition to the many articles that cover a wide range of topics, there are how-to videos, a forum, and a section where you can shop for the tools and materials you'll need. The information found at this Web site can even help you save money on your home improvement project.

The Old House Web

www.oldhouseweb.com

When you live in an older home, the projects can pile up quickly. Luckily, old homes are versatile and are fun and easy to renovate into newer-looking homes. At The Old House Web, you can find ideas for projects relating to your older home, such as how to paint a radiator and how to cure problems caused by moisture and mold. You'll also find style tips for both the indoor and outdoor areas of your older home. You can also make your older home more energy-efficient by following the advice given in the Green Guide. This site offers product comparisons, project estimates, forums, and a blog, so you're sure to find at least a few helpful tips or bits of advice that relate to your older home and the projects you are planning to tackle.

That's News To You

Finding the appropriate online group to match your interests can be a monumental task. So each month, we scour the Internet to bring you the friendliest forums and most interesting bloggers the Web has to offer. This month, we share Web sites that will give you inspirational home decorating and improvement ideas.

iVillage GardenWeb Forums

ths.gardenweb.com/forums

Some of the best, most practical ideas won't come from the inside of a magazine but from real-life folks who want to spruce up the inside or the outside of their homes. At the iVillage GardenWeb Home forum, you can swap ideas with fellow do-it-yourselfers in regard to renovations, housekeeping, and other home improvement topics. You can also browse the Garden Forum and the Nature Forum for inspiration and ideas. These forums have ideas for everything inside or outside the home, including home repairs, decorating, money saving tips, and other topics related to home improvement projects.

Design*Sponge

www.designspongeonline.com

Of all the design blogs on the Web, Design*Sponge stands out with its ultra-modern ideas and DIY projects and instructions. The categories span from furniture to ceramics and textiles, which give you a comprehensive selection when you are looking for tips and ideas for decorating your home.



Share The Wares

Some of the best apples in the online orchard are the free (or free to try) programs available for download. Each month, we feature highlights from our pickings. This month, we take a look at interior decorating programs.

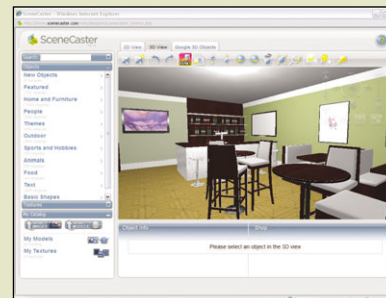
SceneCaster

www.scenecaster.com

Sometimes it can be difficult to imagine how the images and ideas in your head will play out in reality when you are decorating your home. SceneCaster can help you plug your ideas into 3D rooms with its 3D social media program. You can create rooms and share them with others or gain inspiration by browsing other rooms that people have created.

To get started, first create a free account by clicking the Join! button at the top of the page.

Next, choose the Make A Scene button. You start the design process by entering the dimensions of the room you want to create, or you can work from a template (including rooms such as a living room, bedroom, dorm room, condo, office, dining room, diner, and others). Additionally, SceneCaster lets you start from scratch with no walls, which means you're free to design anything your mind can come up with. Once you have a room to work with, you can fill it with furniture and decorative accessories. When you are finished designing the room of your dreams, SceneCaster will link you to the actual product Web page where you have the option to purchase the items you decorated your room with.



SceneCaster lets you design rooms outside of your home, such as diners, pubs, cities, and forests.

Google SketchUp 7

sketchup.google.com

Google's SketchUp 7 is a 3D model-building program that lets you design just about anything. To get started, click the Download Google SketchUp button. You will be given the choice between Google SketchUp 7 (free; recommended for home and personal use) and Google SketchUp 7 Pro (\$495; recommended for professional use). Select SketchUp 7 (unless you are willing to fork over \$495) and then follow the on-screen prompts. (You do not need a Google account to download this program.)

Google SketchUp 7 lets you apply different colors and textures. Once you are done designing your palace or your hut, SketchUp lets you get inside your virtual creation through navigation tools that let you "walk" around and explore the inside.



Back In The Saddle & Back To Work

Online Resources Can Help You Find A Job

For those monitoring the economy, the Bureau of Labor Statistics' (www.bls.gov) Employment Situation Summary, often called the U.S. Jobless Report, continues to provide starkly disconcerting information. After a decline in the number of job losses in April, the numbers spiked back up in May (the last month for which data was available at press time). The Job Loss Report revealed that in May, the number of unemployed people in the United States increased by 787,000 to 14.5 million, and the unemployment rate had risen to 9.4%.

If you're looking for a job or preparing yourself for that possibility, especially if you haven't sought employment or held a job in quite awhile, there is one bit of good news. Online resources for job seekers are better than ever, and older workers can use special avenues to market themselves effectively.

variety of submission techniques. Many job search sites let you type or cut and paste a résumé into a Web-based interface; others let you attach and send a document (some offer both options).

To be prepared, create two versions of your résumé—a simple text version and a more nicely designed one—saved as an Adobe PDF (Portable Document Format) file if possible. (PDF is the most universally readable file format and ensures advanced layout techniques aren't lost in transit.) Check carefully for errors and omissions.

To save a file in text format, look for a Text or Plain Text (with a .TXT file extension) option in the Save As dialog box of your word processor. Afterward,

open the file and ensure that it is readable and doesn't contain unprocessed formatting code. Résumé submission is your first chance for a good impression, no matter how basic the format might be.

For every submission, address all requirements of the job posting. If you are seeking jobs in multiple fields, create different résumé versions. Finally, store your résumés on a portable USB drive and carry it with you in case an opportunity to present it turns up.

For help with your résumé or other job preparation assistance, check out the "Widen The 'Net" section in this article.

Target Your Search

The online job search industry has become so large that finding that just-right position can be intimidating. Many job mega sites, such as Monster.com and CareerBuilder.com, have hundreds of thousands of listings. Furthermore, broad job categories, such as Marketing, can be filled with postings that barely fit the description. Conversely, human resource personnel may fail to post jobs in every category they fit. (See the "Endless Resources" section for more information about searching at mega sites.)

If you have a specific skill set, industry, geographic region, or salary range in mind, you may find success at a more specialized site. A few of the many examples of industry-specific job database sites are the Jobline of the American Society for Information Science and Technology (www.asis.org/careers.html) for technology jobs, 4aNannyJob.com (www.4anannyjob.com) for nanny



Get Out There

For the purposes of this discussion, we'll assume you have a PC and can access it on a regular basis. However, if your household shares a PC and access time is scarce, you can perform searches elsewhere. Many libraries offer free PC use for cardholders, although access times may be restricted (check with your local branch before you go.) Department of Labor offices often have free PC access for job searches, as well.

Your first task will be to update your résumé; be prepared for a

Georgia Department of Labor	
Job Information System (JIS)	
Job Category Search Results	
Thursday May 21, 2009 at 11:05:31 EDT	
The following Job Titles are available in the Geographic Area and Job Category you selected. Select the Title you are interested in for information on specific job openings.	
Return to Job Information System (JIS) Page	
Geographic Area ATLANTA/FULTON COUNTY	
Occupation PROFESSIONAL & MANAGERIAL JOBS	
Number of Jobs & Job Title	Number of Jobs & Job Title
4 ELECTRICAL ENGINEER	1 ELECTRONICS TECHNICIAN
3 DISTRIBUTION FIELD ENG	2 ELECTRICAL ENGIN. POWE
1 AIRPORT ENGINEER*****	1 MECHANICAL ENGINEER
1 APPLICATIONS ENGINEER	1 CHEMICAL ENGINEER
1 FIRE PROTECTION ENGINE	1 PRODUCTION PLANNER
2 QUALITY CONTROL ENGINE	1 ACTUARY
1 ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYST	11 SOFTWARE ENGINEER
3 COMPUTER PROGRAMMER	3 PROGRAMMER-ANALYST****
1 SYSTEMS PROGRAMMER	1 CHIEF, COMPUTER PROGRA

The job information search engines of labor departments (shown is Georgia's) are often quite extensive but may not support specialized search criteria.

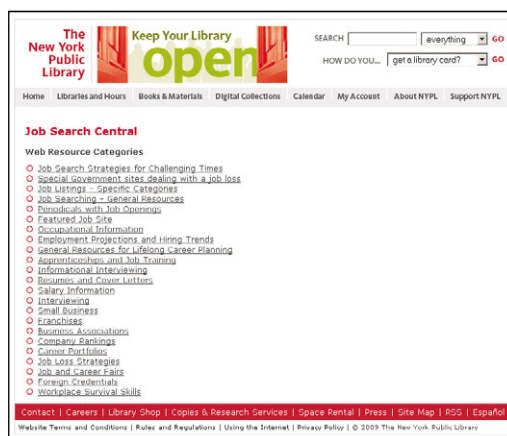
positions, and FindLaw (www.careers.findlaw.com) for law-related openings. (You'll have to register and sign in before this link will transport you to the job search site.)

For other targeted needs (both for jobs and resources), the list is nearly endless. Are you a veteran? Visit the U.S. Department of Labor's HireVetsFirst site (www.dol.gov/vets). If you have been a stay-at-home mom and now find yourself needing to supplement the family's income, consider a work-from-home job. Money Making Mommy (www.moneymakingmommy.com) offers some great articles about work-from-home business ideas that can earn cash for both men and women. (Look under the Work At Home Ideas section.)

If you're not seeking a job right this minute but may soon be doing so, sign up for newsletters from sites that cover your area of interest. Use your favorite search engine to search for an employment category (for example, accounting, legal, technology, grant writing), plus the words "jobs newsletter."

Widen The 'Net

There are a staggering number of targeted job search and preparation sites, but fortunately, some public resources aggregate many of them for your perusal. The New York Public Library is one of our favorites. It offers an excellent list of industry-specific Web sites (although some links are out-of-date) and other employment search assistance. An easy way to locate it is to visit www.nypl.org/services/jobs and click the Employment Websites link. For industry-specific jobs, click Job Listings – Specific Categories.



The New York Public Library has one of the most extensive job search link and reference lists we found.



The AARP Web site offers a wealth of resources for job seekers in the 40-plus age group.

You can uncover additional, valuable information here, as well, including help with résumé writing, interview preparation, and other important tasks. To get started, search www.nypl.org for the keywords "employment job search." Other public libraries offer similar resources. However, the vastness and sophistication of the New York Public Library's database makes it especially helpful.

For those over 40 who are concerned that age might hurt their chances for employment, the Web site of the AARP (formerly known as the American Association of Retired Persons) offers an array of resources.

Visit www.aarpworksearch.org and www.aarp.org/money/work for advice on marketing yourself, avoiding age discrimination, evaluating your skill set, and more. AARP membership is open to anyone 50 and older, but the site's resources are available to everyone.

The AARP site doesn't offer a laundry list of career database links for those in the over 50 age group. Rather, it notes that there are more than 20 such sites on the Internet now and lists WiserWorker.com (www.wiserworker.com) as one of the top choices. We also like the job resource site of Annandale, Va.,-based Senior Employment Resources (seniorjobs.org/joblinks.html). Some of the links are specific to the Washington, D.C., area, but the local links are usually clearly marked.

Networks That Matter

In late 2008, job search engine and resource mega site CareerBuilder (www.careerbuilder.com) released a study of hiring managers and their usage of social networking sites. CareerBuilder found that 22% of hiring managers check sites such as MySpace (www.myspace.com) or Facebook (www.facebook.com) to search for evidence of unsavory characteristics in prospective hires. That may not sound like a large percentage, but it's double the number that reported checking those sites in 2006. Of those who checked, 34% found something that caused them to reject the candidate.

Consequently, if you have detrimental flotsam and jetsam out there, especially on MySpace or Facebook, it's a good idea to clean it up. Furthermore, perform a search for your own name on Google.com or another major search engine. If someone who shares your

The online job search industry has become so large that finding that just-right position can be intimidating.

name has done things of which you wouldn't be proud, consider warning your prospective employer and clarifying that you are not that person.

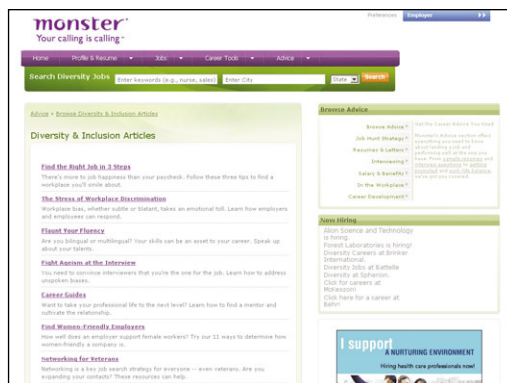
On the positive side, several research firms (including Forrester Research) report that networking through online social sites can assist you in your job search. With more than 40 million members, LinkedIn (www.linkedin.com) is the most prominent business networking site. It's a good (and free) way to connect with professionals you know or with whom you share a common contact. A LinkedIn profile will also show that you are serious about business and technologically astute.

With a free profile, you can search for information about companies, jobs, events, and industries, as well as former classmates and colleagues (a great possibility for referrals). LinkedIn provides value-added work-related resources, such as links to free or low-cost collaboration tools. It also lets you post a professional headline for others to see and can import Twitter comments (see below for more on Twitter).

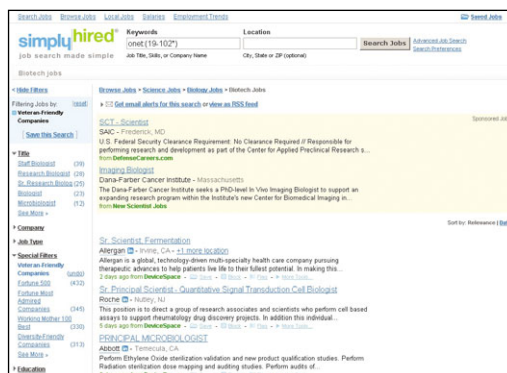
Another good resource is Plaxo (www.plaxo.com), which can link you to both business and personal contacts. It works in similar fashion to LinkedIn and makes suggestions about people that you might know based on friends and associates you have in common. Its Pulse feature lets you post pictures and comments that your friends and business colleagues can see. We like Plaxo because it can automatically integrate with and update your Outlook Contacts list, if you have one. It recently added the ability to aggregate your information from other sites, such as Facebook.

Twitter (www.twitter.com), a site designed to let family, friends, and colleagues update each other on what they are doing, has soared like an eagle since its inception. Today, many news reporters and other

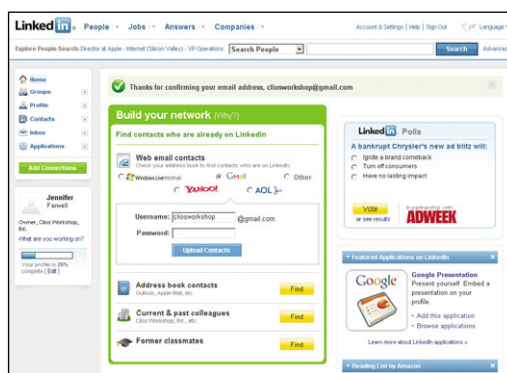
prominent individuals have Twitter sites where they invite people to make comments. Twitter lets you connect to people you don't know based on shared interests, which makes it an excellent networking tool. Keep your posts job search related, and you might get some good leads.



Monster.com has some great articles on diversity and inclusion, from marketing your bilingual capabilities to fighting ageism.



SimplyHired offers specialized filters, including veteran-friendly, working mother, most-admired companies, and more.



As a very popular business networking site, LinkedIn is a great job search tool.

MySpace and Facebook are heavily oriented toward family, friend, and fan networking. It can be a valuable job search tool, especially if you post notes on your site about your job situation or needs. On Facebook especially, you will be surprised at the number of people who will invite you to become friends based on your common associates.

Remember to keep a close eye on social networking sites to ensure friends haven't "tagged" you in photos that might scare off a prospective employer. (When someone tags you, they identify your presence in a photo, which then might link it to your site. You should be able to unlink or hide the photo if you don't want it popping up on your page.)

Endless Resources

As you may have noticed, we've made it through this entire article with no more than a passing mention of job search mega sites. That's because these are easy to find on your own. The two we have mentioned, Monster.com and CareerBuilder.com, offer a substantial pool of resources and listings and let you narrow criteria as you search (Monster.com excels at this). Other mega sites we like are Indeed.com, Linkedup.com, and USA.gov (for government positions).

If you find the effort overwhelming, another great site, SimplyHired (www.simplyhired.com), offers a search engine you can train by rating the jobs you see. Even Craigslist (www.craigslist.com) is a good source for job postings. Finally, don't forget the online classifieds section of your local newspaper. Register your email address, and some online newspapers will send you notices when a job of interest pops up. ■

BY JENNIFER FARWELL

Tasty Tips



Freshly picked from my hydroponic hot-house comes this fall's early harvest of organic offerings. Each of the following digital sprouts was lovingly grown in pesticide-free compost composed of my previous columns. Bon appétit!

If you insert photos or other graphics in your Microsoft Word documents, you may occasionally need to reduce the size of some images. One convenient way to do that is to first create a text box by clicking Insert and Text Box (choose Simple Text Box in Word 2007), then copy and paste your picture into it. The image will automatically resize to fit within the confines of the text box.

Want an easy way to determine the size of a file or folder? Select the item, press ALT-ENTER, then look on the General tab.

Use the little "book" icon located at the bottom of your Word document window to jump to your first spelling error—in the unlikely event you have a spelling error, of course. If the icon displays an X, Word has detected a misspelled word or grammatically challenged sentence. Click it (double-click in Word 2003) to move to the offending text. You can right-click the book icon in Word 2003 to configure your spelling and grammar options.

If you're a smoker, try to avoid smoking while at the keyboard. Tars and nicotine cling to internal components, which can result in shortening the useful life of your system (of the computer, also) and cause overheating and even connectivity problems. Smoking releases tar and other yuck (from the Latin *Yuckus Disgustus*) into the air. These particles are sticky and will adhere to the fan and other electronics within your PC.

If your mouse has a scroll wheel, try pressing it while viewing a document or Web page. Does a strange little icon appear on-screen? If so, don't be frightened. The appearance of that icon means that you have enabled automatic scrolling. Congratulations. To scroll what appears on-screen, all you have to do is move your mouse. No exhausting, finger cramp-inducing clicking is required. To return to "normal" mode, press the mouse wheel again, and the scrolling icon will disappear. This doesn't work with all mice, but give it a try if it sounds fascinating, intriguing, or if you're simply desperate for something to do.

Clicking the tiny Maximize button located in the upper-right corner of any window can be a challenge for many of my bifocular brethren and cistern. For a larger target, double-click a window's Title bar instead, to maximize a window. Double-click it a second time to restore the window to its previous size.

KeepMyMarbles.com is an online vault that uses 256-bit encryption to protect your important and not-so-important

documents. No software is required, other than your browser. Registration is as simple as providing a username, password, first and last name ("Elvis Avocado" here), and email address. I've been using this site

for several months and have found it to be free, secure, and very easy to use. That's a tough combination to beat.

When Vista is installed, it begins building an index of all files, which results in faster file searches. That's the good news. Unfortunately, it also has the ability to slow your computer down to a molasses-like crawl while it's indexing. To avoid this emotionally devastating situation, disable the indexer by going to the Control Panel, System and Maintenance, And Administrative Tools. Double-click Services and then scroll through the list, right-click Windows Search, and click Properties. Under Services Status, click the Stop button. Choose Disable from the Startup Type dropdown menu and click Apply and OK.

If you use Outlook Express and want to hide multiple recipients of an email, you probably know that you have to place those addresses in the Bcc field. By default, however, OE only displays the To and Cc fields. How thoughtless! To display the Bcc field when composing a message, click View, All Headers.

When you send a message containing Bcc recipients, the copy in your Sent Items folder will not display them. If you need to check your Bcc recipients at a later time, with the message open, click File, Properties, and then the Details tab. That will display the raw source data for the message, including your Bcc recipients.

Over time, your formerly neat and tidy, alphabetized Windows XP Start, Programs list may deteriorate into a combination alphabetical and chronological mess—or what I call alphalogical or chronobetrical order. To restore some semblance of tidiness, click Start, Programs or All Programs, then right-click any item in the list. From the menu that appears, click Sort By Name. It's as easy as A-B-C.

Have a great month ahead, and I'll meet you back here in (gasp) October. ■

Mr. Modem (Richard Sherman) is an author, syndicated columnist, radio host, and publisher. "Mr. Modem's Weekly Newsletter" provides personal responses to subscribers' computer and Internet questions, plus weekly computing tips, Web site recommendations, virus alerts, hoax warnings, and more. For additional information, visit www.MrModem.com.



Meet Your Browser

Your Window To The Online World

No matter how weird the world gets—and it's been a banner decade for that—there are still a few things that are practically unthinkable. Would you buy a new computer with the intention of never taking it online? Unless your job involves national security, probably not.

Today, most of a PC's usefulness involves access to the Internet. Sure, you can use any computer to type a letter, edit your photos, and balance your checkbook. But to email that letter, post your photos for others to see, and research things to buy, you'll be turning to the Web. Many standalone programs require you to activate and update them online, too. Even today's

cut-rate laptops are called "netbooks" for a reason: They're meant to be just powerful enough to access applications hosted online, such as Zoho (www.zoho.com).

The key to the Internet is an application known as a browser, so called because it lets you browse Web pages stored on other computers around the world. If you know the address (URL, or universal resource locator) of the Web site (group of pages) you want to visit, such as www.smartcomputing.com, you can simply type it in to the browser. Alternatively, you can search for keywords such as **Smart Computing** and then click the link of the search result that looks

most likely to take you where you want to go.

Windows comes with a built-in browser called Internet Explorer. You don't *have* to use it—you can download and install an alternative browser such as Firefox (www.mozilla.com/firefox) or Chrome (www.google.com/chrome)—but about 66% of the world's Windows users stick with IE, according to Market Share.

Like all useful browsers, IE has certain basic features to help you find Web pages, view their content, and navigate to others (turn to the next two pages to see details about the most important features). The biggie is the Address Bar at the top of the

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Browser Troubleshooting

Fix Common Problems With Firefox & IE



screen. It tells you which Web site and page you're currently browsing by showing you its URL, such as <http://www.smartcomputing.com/techsupport/default.aspx>.

In this example, "smartcomputing.com" indicates the domain, or Web site. The "techsupport/default.aspx" part after it represents a particular page on the site, that of our *Smart Computing* Tech Support Center. Meanwhile, the "http" part stands for Hypertext Transfer Protocol, which is one of the key data communication methods of the Internet. The "www" section stands for World Wide Web. URLs use forward slashes (/) to separate parts of the Web address from each other.

Technically, a URL is simply a way to link to a numeric IP (Internet Protocol) address of another computer on the Internet but in a way that's more understandable to the user. Thankfully, systems called DNS (Domain Name System) servers do the



On the right end of the Status Bar, you may sometimes notice a closed padlock icon that appears when you're on a Web page with a URL that begins with <https://>. The "s" is for "secure," meaning that your connection to the site has been automatically encrypted as a safeguard against digital eavesdroppers. When you log in to a banking or online shopping site, make sure you see this icon before you type in any account or credit card details.

translating of URLs to IP addresses, so you don't have to remember to type 12.39.144.5 to visit SmartComputing.com, for example.

When you browse to a new Web page, it will take a few seconds or more to appear as the data makes its way across the miles to your PC. While you're waiting for the page to

load, you may notice the Status Bar at the bottom of the browser window. It may read "Downloading" next to the URL and display a progress bar when it's still waiting for part of the page to arrive, or it may read "Done" when there's no more data on the way.

Finally, if you want to return to the previous page to look at something you missed or to click a different link, click the Back button. Once you do so, you'll notice that the heretofore grayed-out Forward button is now clickable. The Forward button will take you to Web pages you browsed more recently and in the order in which you viewed them.

These are just the basics of browsing, but they'll get you started. Check out the rest of the articles in this month's feature package for more advanced tips. Oh, and welcome to the Web.

BY MARTY SEMS

Browser Basics ...

Address Bar

This field tells you which Web site (SmartComputing.com) and page (TechSupport/default.aspx) you're viewing. You can type URLs directly into the Address Bar, too; simply press ENTER afterward.

Back

After you've browsed from one Web page to another, such as by clicking a hyperlink, this button lets you return to the previous page. Once you've gone backward, the Forward button will activate in case you want to view a later page again. Click the down arrow icon next to these buttons if you want to quickly jump to a particular page in your browsing history.

Favorites\Bookmarks

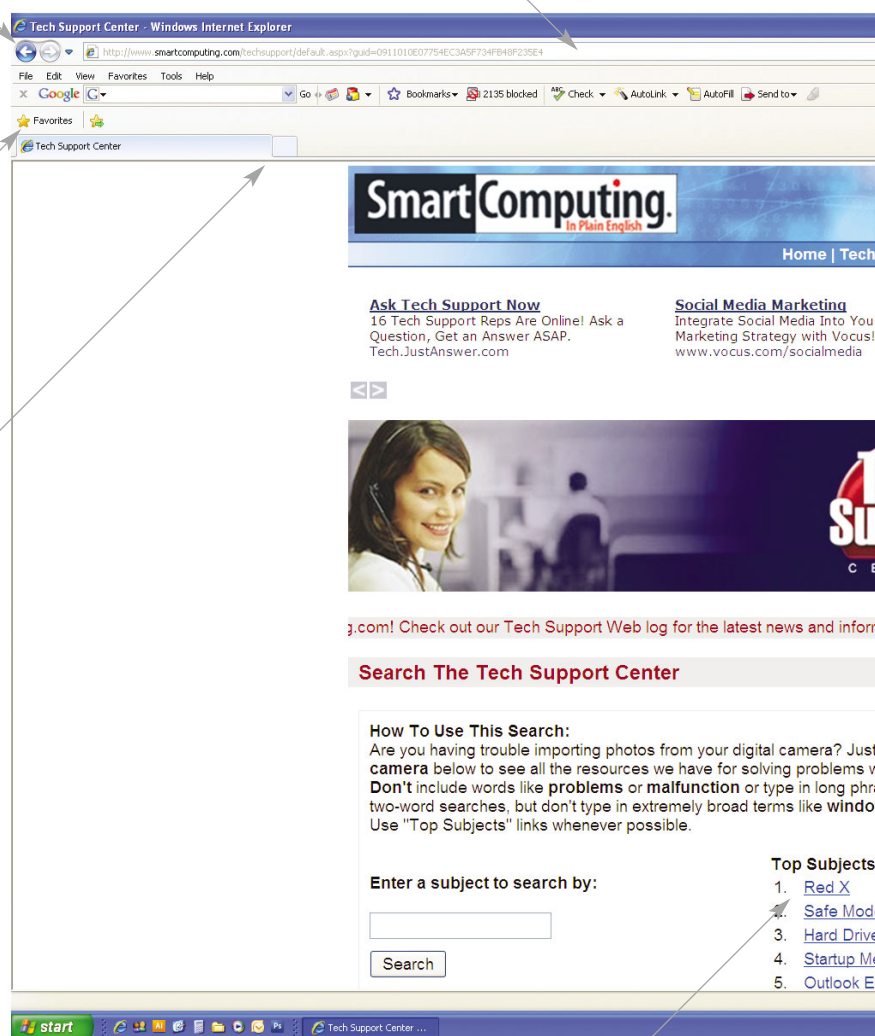
Every browser lets you bookmark particular pages or add them to its list of Favorites or Bookmarks, so you can return to the pages with a mouse click or two instead of typing search terms or a URL. In IE8, click Favorites to choose a site from your personal list. Add To Favorites makes a bookmark to the current page.

Tabs

Virtually all browsers now let you load Web pages in separate tabs, such as by pressing CTRL while clicking a link. Like the tabs in a settings panel, you can switch your view from one to another by clicking their labels at the top. Opening a link in a new tab is useful when you want to read something later without interrupting your current browsing activity. Also, many users set their home "pages" to multiple browser tabs, so their news, weather, and social networking sites become available all at once.

Hyperlink

Some underlined and/or boldfaced terms, as well as certain graphics, will take you to a different Web page when you click them; these are called hyperlinks. Your mouse pointer will change, usually to a pointing hand, when you hover it over a link.



Refresh

This button tells the server hosting the Web page to send the latest text and other content to your browser. It's useful for updating a news site's headlines, for example, if you don't want to wait a few minutes for the site's automatic refresh feature. Refresh is also handy when a page is obviously missing some of its content. Its hotkey is F5, in case you'd rather press a key than click an icon.

Search field

Not present on all browsers by default, the Search field lets you look for Web pages when you don't know their URLs (or don't want to type it all in). Type a keyword or two, such as **Smart Computing** and then press ENTER. A list of Web pages containing your keywords will appear. The pages at the top of the list are the ones the search engine's algorithms have decided are the most relevant to the search terms, but you can scroll downward through the results or modify your keywords if the search engine guessed wrong.

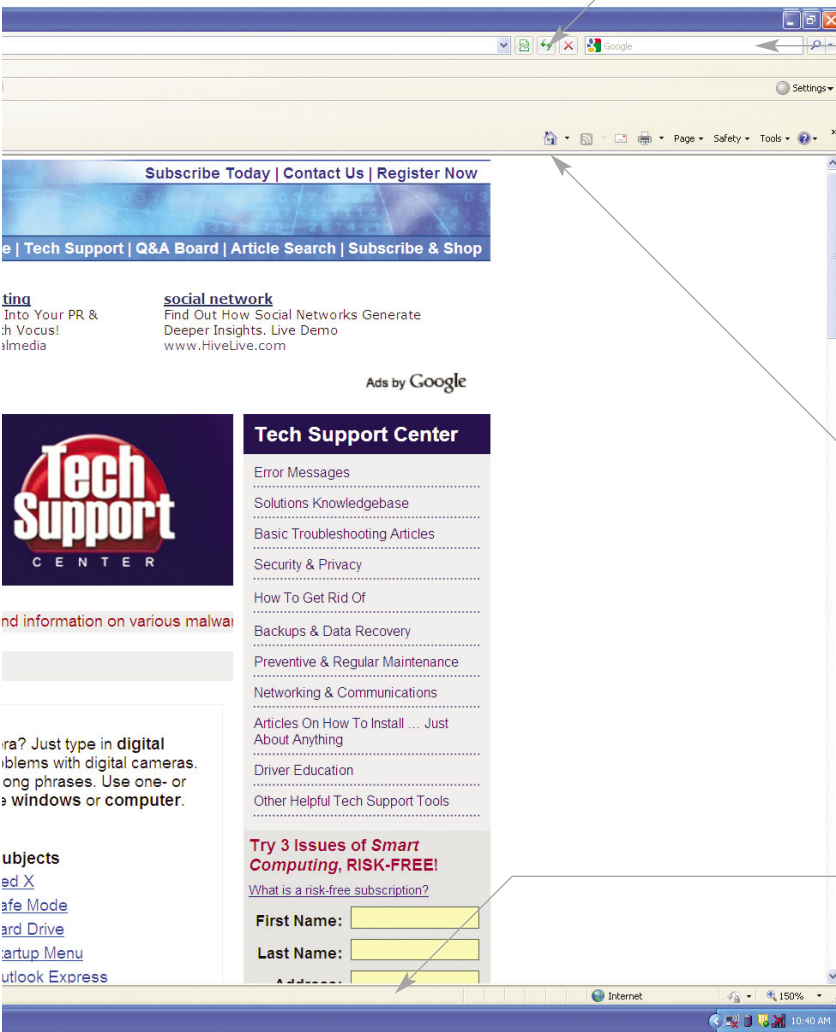
Home

Another universal icon, Home reloads the first Web page(s) you see when you launch your browser. Many users change their browser's default home page to the site with which they prefer to start Web surfing, such as a favorite search engine or Facebook.com.

Status Bar

This invaluable readout tells you where a hyper-link would take you without actually having to click it to find out. If you're suspicious that a link may lead you to a site with objectionable content, hover your mouse pointer over it and read the URL in the Status Bar. Also, when a Web page is still loading, you'll see a progress bar here; the word "Done" will appear when everything has

ostensibly been received. The Status Bar is also the home of the security icon, which appears as a closed padlock when you're browsing a site with a secure, encrypted connection to your browser.





Internet Explorer 8

Personalize Features & Settings

Internet Explorer 8 is overflowing with features that will increase the efficiency of your online browsing, if you know how to use them to your advantage. IE8 includes your basic functions such as Favorites and Tools, of course, but Microsoft also expanded the usability of IE8 for the user who likes a more developed Web browsing experience.

Customizing IE8 gives you more freedom and accessibility by moderating your security settings, keeping your cache clean, and managing your add-ons. It's worth it to take some time to get familiar with IE8, especially if you want to boost your Internet savvy.

Check Security Settings

Surfing the Web securely is a paramount concern, considering your personal vulnerabilities (banking accounts, sensitive data, passwords) and the high volume of malicious software on the 'Net. IE8 includes a number of built-in security features to protect

you from online attackers, keep your information private, and provide a filtered environment.

InPrivate Browsing. This trace-free feature lets you browse the Web on a PC without leaving evidence of your surfing activities. It's primarily useful for checking email or password-protected Web sites in a public setting (such as a coffeehouse or library) or if you're purchasing a gift for a loved one who uses the same PC. InPrivate Browsing doesn't track browsing history, temporary Internet files, form data, cookies, usernames, or passwords. There are two ways to open InPrivate Browsing: Click the New Tab button next to your first open tab and then click Browse With InPrivate or click the Safety menu and select InPrivate Browsing, which opens a new private window.

InPrivate Filtering. To add an extra layer of security to your browsing activity, you can control third-party Web sites that include content that's able to track which sites you're visiting. Each time you start a new browsing session

(open a new IE browser window), you can activate this feature by clicking the Safety menu and selecting InPrivate Filtering. Click InPrivate Filtering Settings in the same menu to choose whether you would like IE to block content providers from receiving your information or decide which providers you want to allow access.

Enhanced delete browsing history. Although browsing history deletion is not a brand-new feature to IE, the augmented version lets you save cookies and temporary Internet files so you won't lose the data for your preferred Web sites. When you click Tools and choose Delete Browsing History, you'll notice the addition of individual checkboxes that let you determine what type of data you would like to delete, such as form data and InPrivate Filtering data.

SmartScreen filter. IE's phishing and malware protection, SmartScreen, utilizes a set of preventive technologies to detect malicious sites and downloads. Click-jacking prevention and automatic crash recovery,

explained in detail below, are incorporated into SmartScreen technology. SmartScreen identifies and removes only the malware or phishing content on a site without altering the site itself. Any downloads that are reported unsafe are also blocked by the SmartScreen filter. Click the Safety menu, select SmartScreen Filter, and click Check This Website to receive a report about the site.

Click-jacking prevention. This is a relatively new method of online deception, whereby an attacker tricks you into clicking malicious content that's disguised as a normal Web site. When you click these "dummy buttons," you could actually be unknowingly changing PC or browser settings or looking at ads supported by cybercriminals.

Automatic crash recovery. The tab isolation feature will segregate any tab that crashes due to an illegitimate Web site or add-on. Your IE8 browser won't be affected, so you can easily continue exploring the Web. Tabs that suddenly crash or close will automatically reopen and preserve the sites you were visiting.

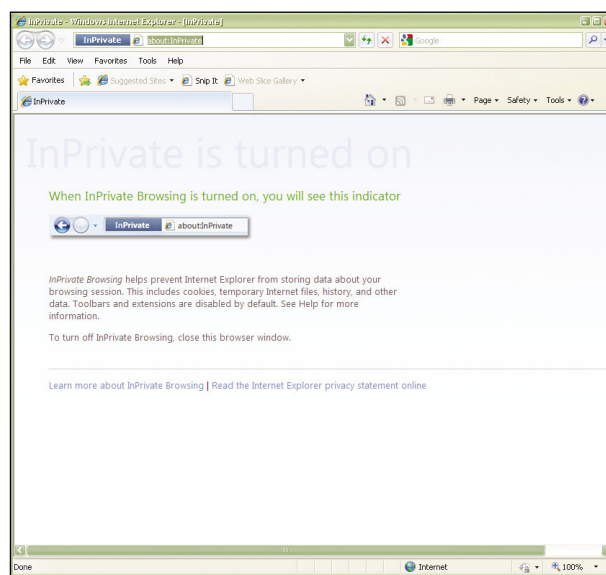
Browsing privacy. In addition to these settings, you can adjust your browsing privacy in Internet Options. Click Tools, select Internet Options, and then choose the Privacy tab. In the Settings category, you can select a protection level ranging from Accept All Cookies (Internet text files) to Block All Cookies. You can choose to activate the Pop-Up Blocker by selecting the Turn On Pop-Up Blocker box.

Clear Temporary Files

Your browser's temporary Internet files, often referred to as the **cache**, are a record of your 'Net surfing history stored in a folder on your PC. This data includes images, sounds, Web pages,

saved passwords, and **cookies** (personal text files that store "what, where, and when" information regarding your browsing activity). For the most part, temporary Internet files help Web pages load faster because some of the stored information is readily accessible; however, cache can fill up critical space on your hard drive, so you must clear out these files periodically.

To do this in IE8, you'll start by clicking the Tools menu and selecting Internet Options. Locate the Browsing History section on the General tab. Next, Click the Delete button, which will open the Delete Browsing History window. When you decide which information you would like to clear, check the box next to each category.



The InPrivate Browsing feature in Internet Explorer 8 opens a secure window that keeps the browser from storing history, cookies, temporary files, and other information about your Web surfing activity.

Specifically, you can delete data in the following categories: Temporary Internet Files, Cookies, History, Form Data, Passwords, and InPrivate Filtering Data. (Be sure to select the Preserve Favorites Website Data box to save cookies and other files for sites in your Favorites list.) To only delete Temporary Internet Files, select the associated box and click Delete. Click OK in Internet Options to exit.

You also have the option to restrict or free space for temporary Internet files. Under Browsing History, click the Settings button. In Disk Space To Use, Microsoft recommends allotting between 50 and 250MB for temporary Internet files. If you prefer to limit this space, select 50MB or a lower number. Or, choose a higher amount to save more temporary files. Click OK when finished.

Install & Manage Add-Ons

The steps to accumulating and managing IE add-ons involves minimal effort. Microsoft offers an official Add-Ons Gallery and search engine at www.ieaddons.com for browsing add-

ons designed specifically for IE8. The Add-Ons Gallery divides selections by interest-based categories, such as Blogging, Email, News, Shopping, Travel, and Weather. Click one category in the left side of the home page to get started.

Thanks to some advanced additions to IE8, there are more add-on options than just toolbars. You can now use two new tools called Accelerators and Web Slices. Accelerators reduce the time it takes to perform normal browsing tasks such as blogging, translating, mapping, and typing search terms via Wikipedia, Google, and Windows Live. To use this convenient feature, highlight text on any Web page and

click the Accelerator button (a blue arrow in a box) to open the default list mentioned above. To add more Accelerators to this list, click Accelerators under Internet Explorer 8 Only at the bottom of the Add-Ons Gallery home site. You will install the Accelerator by clicking Add To Internet Explorer. IE8 will ask you Do You Want To Add This Accelerator?; click Add to finish.

Instead of constantly opening and refreshing frequently visited sites to check email, weather, auction items, and social networking updates, Web Slices highlights a green icon to alert you of newly available information—it will only appear if a new Web Slice is on the page. To add sites to Web Slices, click the icon and select the site listed (which should be the page you're currently viewing). There's a small selection of Web Slices

in the IE Add-Ons Gallery. You'll install these the same way you add Accelerators; once a Web Slice is installed, you should be able to view it on the Command Bar.

For example, on the main page of the Add-Ons Gallery, click the Finance category to peruse add-ons that will keep you up-to-date on the latest stock quotes. You'll also find currency converters and finance news add-ons.

When you've decided which add-on would be useful to you, you can click the Add To Internet Explorer button. Some add-ons are designed by third parties or another site, which means you can link to the original site to install the add-on if you like.

To view and manage add-on settings, click the Tools menu and select Manage Add-Ons. By default, your add-ons should be enabled. If you want to disable some of your add-ons, click the name of the add-on under its developer title, and its details will appear in the bottom pane of the Manage Add-Ons window. Click the Disable button to stop the functionality of that particular add-on.

Choice Add-Ons

The best add-ons make Internet Explorer 8 more useful to you. Check out these popular add-ons to see if any belong on your IE8.

AOL Mail Web Slice

www.ieaddons.com/en/details/email/AOL_Mail_Web_Slice

Check your AOL inbox without even typing the URL. This Web Slice provides a preview of the sender, subject, and receiving time.

Cooliris

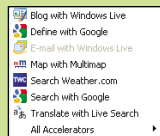
www.ieaddons.com/en/details/photosvideos/Cooliris_for_Internet_Explorer

This add-on creates an integrative 3D wall for browsing innumerable photos and videos across the Web. Cooliris is compatible with many popular sites, such as Facebook, Flickr, Google Image Search, YouTube, and more. When you're clicking through search engine image results or photo albums on Facebook, hover your mouse pointer over a photo and click the Cooliris icon to open the program so you can smoothly scroll through a user-friendly panel of images.

Weather.com

www.ieaddons.com/en/details/weather/Weathercom

The Weather.com Accelerator is a great tool for checking the forecast for vacation spots. For example, when you're searching the Web for flights to Miami, Fla., you can highlight the city, click the Weather.com Accelerator, and go directly to the current weather in Miami.



Your list of accelerators appears when you highlight a section of text on a Web page and then click the Accelerator symbol.

PackageTracker

www.ieaddons.com/en/details/mapping/PackageTracker_Accelerator

Follow your shipments across the world with the PackageTracker Accelerator. Using Google Maps, PackageTracker locates each city through which your package has traveled. It also updates you on the status and pickup time of your package.

The New York Times Most Emailed

www.nytimes.com/marketing/webslices

Want to know what kind of news is important on the Web today? Use *The New York Times* Most E-Mailed Web Slice to quickly access the top 10 news headlines emailed across the Internet.

Download Files

Most of the popular Internet browsers—Mozilla Firefox, Apple Safari, and Google Chrome—feature a download manager that lets you view the downloading process and gives the option to pause or resume downloads already underway. Although IE8 lacks this extra, downloading files via IE8 isn't complicated.

After you click Download File, a File Download dialog box will open asking if you want to open or save the file. Depending on what action you prefer to take, select Open to immediately download and view the file. To store the file on your PC's hard drive, click Save. IE will open the Save As dialog box; here you will choose a location for the file, such as My Documents or the Desktop. Click the File Name field to edit the name according to your liking and then click Save.

It's Up To You

You can know your browser like the back of your hand when you customize it just the way you like it. Searching, sharing, and networking doesn't have to require much experience when IE8 is so easy to personalize and use. ■

BY JOANNA SAFFORD

Firefox 3

14,000 New Features To Try



Mozilla's Firefox, an increasingly popular Web browser, is now on its third version. Since Firefox 3 first rolled out, many computer users have been exploring the new features and add-ons, of which there are many. In fact, according to Mozilla's Firefox Web site (www.mozilla.com/firefox), there are over 14,000 modifications that have been made between Firefox 2 and Firefox 3—not a number to sneeze at.

Not to worry, we won't elaborate on all 14,000, but we will show you some of the most important and useful new features and how they work. You may be surprised at all the new tweaks and how they will make your computing life easier, from working with the new

security features to customizing the look of your browser.

Security Settings

Firefox has had a reputation for security since its inception, and version 3 has even more security features.

To protect against phishing attacks, Firefox will block access to a spurious Web site if you click a suspicious link and will give you an on-screen warning. The warning displays the heading Reported Web Forgery and gives you the option of clicking Get Me Out Of

Here (to return to the previous page), Why Was This Site Blocked (to get more information on how Firefox's phishing protection works), or Ignore This Warning (if you want to take your chances with the sharks).

Firefox 3's malware protection works in a similar fashion: If you're about to visit a site that contains malware, Firefox will block access and present you with a Reported Attack Site alert. You can ignore the warning, return to the previous page, or get more information, just as you can with the Reported Web Forgery warning. Firefox maintains a database of malicious Web sites in an effort to protect computer users from dangerous Web sites.

Another useful security tool is the new Instant Web Site ID feature. Some sites display a green bar with the Web site's logo and title within the Address Bar. If you click this green bar, you can see valuable information about the site and who runs it, such as the name of the company, whether it's encrypted, and verification by VeriSign. Click More Information to see additional details,

The Instant Web Site ID feature lets you view important information about a Web site.



such as the security certificate and type of encryption, and edit the site permissions so you can control how your browser interacts with the Web site.

The Password Manager has a slight enhancement, too. In past versions of Firefox, when you entered a password, the browser would ask if you wanted it to remember the password so you didn't have to retype it the next time you visited the site. However, if you accidentally entered the wrong password, Firefox would remember it incorrectly and negate the point of storing the password in the first place. Now, you're given the same options of Remember, Never For This Site, or Not Now regarding remembering the password, but you can make your selection after the page loads, thus avoiding situations such as the one mentioned above.

You can customize any of your browser's security settings, too. Click Tools and click Options to bring up the Options dialog box. Click the Security icon. On this page, you can create and edit exceptions for certain Web sites that you trust, control which sites remember your passwords, and select which warning messages you wish to see when browsing.

Manage Downloads

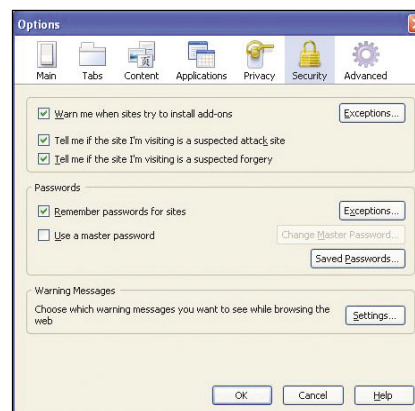
It's mostly an afterthought for many of us, but Firefox's Download Manager is an integral part of our Web browsing experience. This tool lets you customize the downloading experience as well as keep track of all your past and current downloads.

Anytime you select a file to download, the Downloads window appears, and it lists any and all current downloads and displays their respective progress. You can also open this window anytime by clicking Tools and then Downloads, or simply press CTRL-J.

Firefox automatically scans any downloads for viruses. You can pause and resume the download process at any time; for example, if you're in the middle of a long download and have to grab your notebook and run, you

can click the Pause icon to the right of the item in the Downloads window. When you're back home, you can fire up your computer, launch Firefox, open the Downloads window, and click the Play icon to resume or the X icon to cancel the download.

Firefox keeps track of all your past downloads, so anytime you need to go back and find one again, it will still be there. If the file you're looking for still exists in the place to which you originally downloaded it, you can open the file or the folder containing it by right-clicking the item and selecting the



From the Security section of the Options window, you can customize your browser's security settings.

appropriate task (Open or Open Containing Folder). However, if the file has been moved or deleted, you can't open it from the Downloads window.

Among the information Firefox remembers about each download is the URL of the page from which you downloaded the item, as well as when you downloaded it. So if you ever need to download something again but can't remember the Web site address (let alone the specific page), you can search for it in the Downloads window, double-click the item, and select Go To Download Page. The Web site will open in a new tab or window.

The Downloads window also features a Search bar, so you can simply enter part of the name of a file you previously downloaded to locate it. Of

course, all that saved data takes up space, so if you want to delete the stored download information, simply click Clear List on the bottom-left side of the Downloads window.

Bookmarks Manager

With this version of Firefox, the Mozilla folks have streamlined bookmark management. Case in point: the so-called "Awesome Bar." Essentially just the Address Bar with some nifty tweaks, the Awesome Bar is armed with ways to easily manage your previously visited Web sites as well as bookmarks.

For one thing, Firefox remembers every site you visited, and when you type in any part of the site's name or URL, it will appear in the list below the Address Bar. For example, if you previously visited www.smartcomputing.com, you could enter the URL in the Address Bar or "smart," "smart computing," or even "computing," and you'll see the site in the list.

To bookmark a site you're viewing, all you have to do is click the star icon on the right side of the Address Bar once. Clicking the star a second time will bring up the Edit This Bookmark dialog box, from which you can name the bookmark, file it in the appropriate folder, or tag it.

The former two features may not be especially impressive to you, but the ability to tag bookmarks is an invaluable function. Simply enter a keyword you'll remember in the Tags text field in the Edit This Bookmark window and click Done. The next time you want to see that bookmark, you no longer have to dig through your bookmark library to find it. Instead, enter the keyword or keywords into the Address Bar, and any sites you tagged with those keywords will appear in the list below.

Install & Manage Add-Ons

Increasingly, technology is augmented by applications you can download—think of Apple's App Store or Google's Android Market. Firefox's

pseudo version of this is the vast collection of add-ons that are available. Rather than applications per se, add-ons are extra features you can add to your Web browser to customize and personalize it to your tastes and needs.

There are two ways to get add-ons. One is to visit Firefox's Add-Ons Web site (<https://addons.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/>) and browse or search for them; the other is to click Tools and then Add-Ons within an open Firefox browser. This will bring up the Add-Ons dialog box. When the window appears, click the Get Add-Ons tab. From here, Firefox will offer recommendations for add-ons, complete with a five-star user rating system; you can also search for add-ons using the Search All Add-Ons text field, or click Browse All Add-Ons to open the Firefox Add-Ons Web site. Within the Add-Ons window, if you find an add-on you like, click Add To Firefox and follow the on-screen directions to install it to your bag of Firefox tools.

The Add-Ons window is also where you can manage all of your existing add-ons. Add-Ons fall into different categories, and they're organized for you—Extensions, Themes, and Plugins. There is also an area for Updates, which lets you see if there is an update available for any of your extensions, and the Installation area indicates if you have an add-on that requires action on your part to complete an installation.

Etcetera

There are thousands of other new features in Firefox 3; the ones discussed in this article are just a few of the useful tools built into this browser. As you use Firefox 3, you'll continue discovering new features that help you in your computing life, such as a spell checker for when you're writing emails and blogs; Session Restore if Firefox crashes or you have an unrelated computer problem; and more themes, skins, and personas than you can possibly use. ■

BY SETH COLANER

Choice Add-Ons

There are approximately a bajillion add-ons available for Firefox 3. Here are a few that you may find compelling.

Interclue

<https://addons.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/addon/4999>
interclue.com/index.html

Interclue is an add-on that lets you preview Web sites' content before you visit the site. Just hover your mouse pointer over a link, and a sample of the Web site pops up.

Yoono

<https://addons.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/addon/1833>
www.yoono.com/index.html

An add-on that essentially aggregates all your social networking and chat services into a single feed, Yoono resides in your browser as a sidebar that can be minimized. Updates from other users will pop up as messages.

FoxyTunes

<https://addons.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/addon/219>
www.foxytunes.com

This add-on has a little set of controls that appear on the Status Bar. From the controls, you can select different music players; control the play, pause, and track skip functions; and utilize various means of searching for more information about the artist or music.

Walnut For Firefox

<https://addons.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/addon/122>

Walnut For Firefox is simply a theme for Firefox that gives the toolbars, tabs, Status Bar, and more a wooden appearance.

Morning Coffee

<https://addons.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/addon/2677>

Morning Coffee is a perfect add-on for anyone who has sites he regularly visits. After installing the add-on, you just add URLs to the Morning Coffee list. Simply click the coffee cup icon next to the Address Bar, and poof—all your regular sites open in tabs.

Read It Later

<https://addons.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/addon/7661>
readitlaterlist.com

Read It Later is a place where you can bookmark Web pages temporarily. For instance, you may find a site with an article that you want to read only once but at a later time. With Read It Later, you can avoid a clutter of bookmarks—just click the book icon in the toolbar to see what pages are waiting for your eyes.

FoxTab

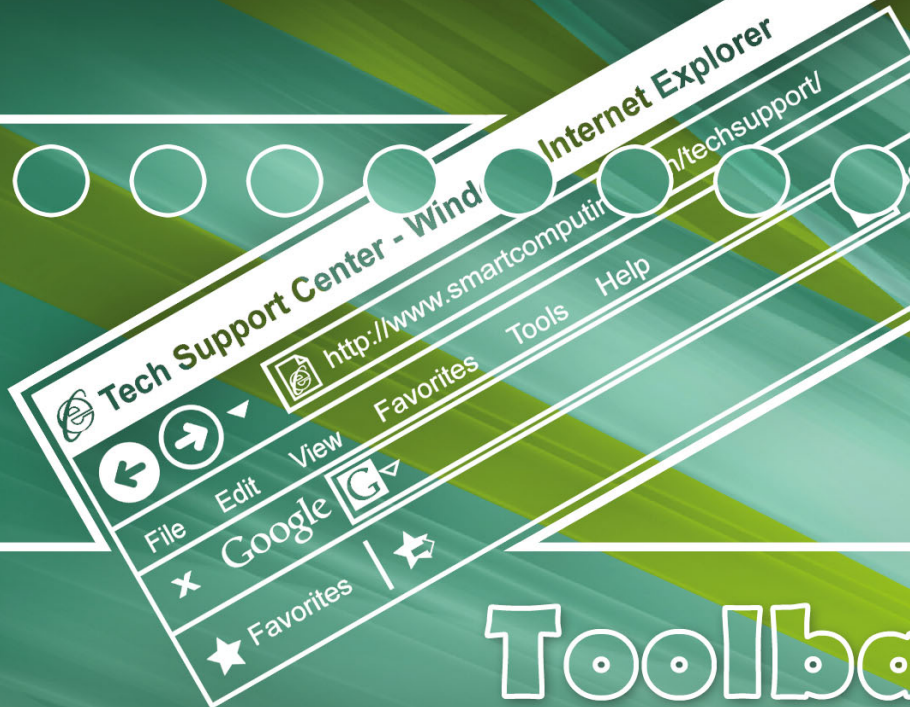
<https://addons.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/addon/8879>
www.foxtab.com/1.1.2/dn

Not only does FoxTab look slick, it's plenty useful, too. Instead of pressing ALT-TAB to toggle between open browser windows, you can use FoxTab's graphical 3D interface.

Google Preview

<https://addons.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/addon/189>

Google Preview includes an image next to each search result.



Toolbar Time

Firefox & Internet Explorer Enhancements

Admittedly, Web browsers can be rather bare when you download them for the first time. Default toolbars provide the basic navigational tools and settings you need to browse freely. But, a toolbar that's designed to streamline and support your browsing experience can make a world of difference. Every Internet browser has add-on software programmed specifically for

that browser. In light of this, we'll focus on two of the most used browsers—Microsoft Internet Explorer 8 and Mozilla Firefox 3—as we provide a sampling of some popular toolbars that help you make business connections, let you search more efficiently, capture screen shots, shop online with confidence, translate vocabulary to different languages, and more.

Toolbar Scams & Malicious Add-Ons

Not all toolbars are as harmless as they may seem. In recent Internet history, malicious toolbars have been known to disguise themselves as legitimate extensions from recognized Internet companies. Sometimes, an unsuspecting surfer will attempt to install a toolbar from a scam site posing as a true third-party site. When the malicious toolbar or add-on is installed, it downloads some form of malware, such as a backdoor Trojan or worm. If a new toolbar unexpectedly appears on your browser, you are more than likely a victim of a malware attack. To avoid getting scammed, follow these toolbar safety tips:

- Check for the authenticity of any Web site promoting a downloadable toolbar; look for privacy policies, contact information, and a copyright.
- Use well-known sources, such as Microsoft, Mozilla, and Google, to download and install your toolbars.
- If emails or other messages include links for downloading toolbars, be skeptical.
- If new windows or pop-ups open related to a toolbar you've recently installed, attempt to close them and use your anti-malware program to scan your PC.

Internet Explorer

Many toolbars are originally created by third-party developers; these companies make easy-to-use browser add-ons that feature conveniently placed buttons, icons, menus, and search fields for increased functionality. Microsoft's Add-Ons site (www.ieaddons.com/en/toolbars) is a comprehensive database for searching and downloading toolbars. The large selection is easy to browse, but you can also search for third-party add-ons outside of Microsoft's resources through a site that offers a direct download.



StumbleUpon

www.stumbleupon.com

We all have preferred Web sites we visit on a regular basis. StumbleUpon helps filter Web sites that match your preferences, so you can sift through only the high-quality sites, as opposed to the outdated or older sites.

You can add this toolbar to your IE browser directly from StumbleUpon's home page (first you'll want to create your own StumbleUpon account). Once installed, you're prompted to customize the StumbleUpon toolbar by selecting interest categories, such as animals, environment, travel, and multimedia. By accessing your StumbleUpon account, you can save your site preferences.

Shopping Advisor

www.buysafe.com

If you're concerned about safe online purchases, Shopping Advisor will be an invaluable add-on to your browser. It rates online retailers so you can shop from sites that are widely believed to be legitimate.

Shopping Advisor also insures your purchases up to \$25,000 (free with Shopping Advisor) and protects you from identity theft (30-day free trial). Using the Safe Shopping Portal, you can browse results approved through Bonded Merchants. When you're shopping at Google, Yahoo!, MSN, or eBay, be sure to check the ratings that ensure reliable transactions. To download this toolbar, direct your browser to www.buysafe.com, click the Learn More: Shopping Advisor button, and select Install Add-On For Windows.

LinkedIn

www.linkedin.com

The LinkedIn toolbar lets you network with increased convenience, due to the toolbar's quick search feature. You can search by names, titles, companies, and job postings.



To find the toolbar, go to the site's main page. Click Browser Toolbar at the bottom of the page (in the Tools section). Click the Download Now button for IE Toolbar 3.0.

Navigating to your LinkedIn Profile is a breeze: Click the In button and select My Profile (My Contacts are available in the same menu). You can save profiles you've already visited

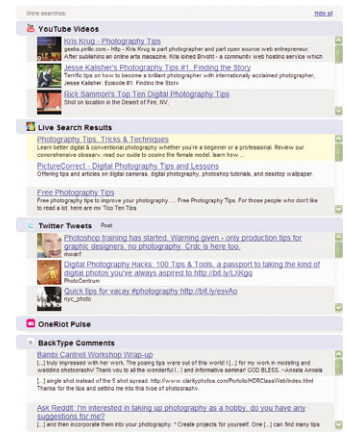
because you have direct access to LinkedIn. Additionally, the Jobs Insider keeps you connected to new job postings and helps you in your career path. You don't have to be a member to use the LinkedIn toolbar, but you may want to become one in order to take full advantage of the toolbar's features, including direct access to LinkedIn.

WebMynd

www.webmynd.com

WebMynd optimizes your Google searches by adding a configurable, multisite sidebar to the search results. It shifts the advertisements that normally fill the right side of your Google results page to the bottom, giving you broad searchability.

The enhanced sidebar features customized search results through sites such as Windows Live Search, The Economist, CNN, Delicious, YouTube, and Twitter. When you need to make more room to view your Google results, click Hide All at the top of the WebMynd sidebar.

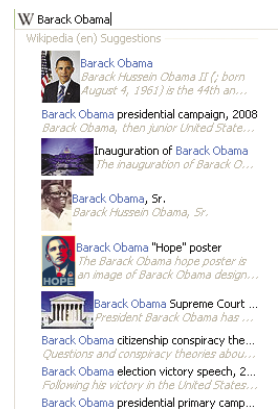


Wikipedia Visual Search

www.ieaddons.com

This IE add-on is fairly self-explanatory—it lets you search the Wikipedia main site and supplies image-based search results in a drop-down menu. Find Wikipedia Visual Search in the Add-Ons Gallery's Search section.

Wikipedia Visual Search also provides multiple suggestions to match your search inquiry. Normally, these results appear in the disambiguation page, but Visual Search's condensed format helps you locate your results in fewer steps.



eBay Visual Search

www.ieaddons.com

Another convenient visual toolbar utilizes eBay's search features, so you can search for products as you come across items you might want to purchase. eBay Visual Search provides popular search suggestions as well as popular matches. Find eBay Visual Search in the Add-Ons Gallery's Search section.

When you choose a relevant suggestion or popular item, the toolbar takes you to eBay search results or to the product page. From here, you can continue to search for items in detail and begin bidding when you've found the appropriate item.



Twitter Search

www.twitter-bar.com

The Twitter Search toolbar is feature-packed with a Tweet button, Google-powered Search box, a Research tab, Twitter Tips, RSS (Really Simple Syndication) feeds, and more.

If you click the Twitter icon on the left side of the toolbar, you'll go directly to the home page (to sign in) or to your personal Twitter feed. Under Tools, you'll find a plethora of quick-access Twitter functions such as Twitblogs, Twickly, Twitter Media, and Twitter Extras. The Research tab lists links to Twitter-related pages including Re:Tweetist (news), TweetBeep (Twitter alerts via email), and TwitProfiles (user directory).

Tweeters who like to follow famous tweeters will appreciate the Celebrities tab for quick access to celebrity pages. The Twitter TV and radio tabs stream popular audio and video. Twitter Search's E-mail Notifier supports Gmail, Yahoo!, AOL, and Windows Live.



Twitter Search Toolbar

Firefox

If you're dedicated to Mozilla's Firefox browser, then you'll be happy to know that there's an overabundance of toolbars designed for the browser. We've selected some of the most useful toolbars and extensions; however, feel free to make your own selections at <https://addons.mozilla.org>. Keep in mind that some of the toolbars below are available for download in other browsers, as well.



Google Toolbar

toolbar.google.com



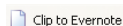
Overflowing with features, the Google Toolbar has custom buttons from previous Google Toolbar versions, as well as new additions. Toolbar synchronization gives you access to your particular toolbar settings regardless of what computer you're using (it requires remote installation). Google Web History lets you search your recent Web activity and helps you recall a site you found but can no longer remember.

Use the SpellCheck button to locate any typos when you're writing an email or posting to a forum. The Firefox features include opening files via Google Docs in a new Firefox window, automatically opening a Gmail Compose Mail page, and choosing among streamlined preset toolbar layouts.

Evernote Web Clipper

www.evernote.com

Evernote lets you make a Web-based note of items you want to remember on Web pages by "clipping," capturing,



and creating text or audio. The Evernote Web Clipper optimizes these features by helping you move them to your account by dragging clips to the Clip To Evernote bookmarklet (a type of browser-based computer application that functions as a bookmark on your toolbar).

Installing Evernote Web Clipper is incredibly simple: Click the Clip To Evernote button at www.evernote.com/about/download and drag it to your toolbar. To utilize the Web Clipper bookmarklet appropriately, highlight text and images and then click Clip To Evernote.

WordLearner Toolbar

www.wordlearner.com



The WordLearner toolbar collects and teaches you new words—all you have to do is practice. The Dictionary Search feature lets you choose from various translations and definitions. To read a word or phrase in another language, you'll add it to the toolbar. Now, you can use Save Words to message new words to your WordLearner account.

WordLearner provides four speedy ways to add text to the toolbar. Highlight text and right-click; choose from Add Word To Toolbar, Add Definition To Toolbar, Add Translation To Toolbar, and Add As An Example Sentence. Go to www.wordlearner.com/page/wordtools and click Add WordLearner To Your Firefox Instant Search Box.

Capture It!

www.craftec.co.jp/captureit/entb

As a fully featured screen capture tool, Capture It! can take



a snapshot of a portion of a Web page or the entire page and save it to your My Pictures folder on your PC. Capture It! includes four screen grab modes: box capture, browser capture, view area capture, and auto-scrolling mode.

When in box capture mode, you can press the SHIFT key to zoom in on a small area circling the cursor location on the page. To place the cursor image precisely on the item you want to capture, use the arrow keys or move the cursor with your mouse to the desired position.

Yahoo! Toolbar

toolbar.yahoo.com



The Yahoo! Toolbar is practically a mini browser within a browser. It has so many tools, features, and helpful shortcuts that you don't have to open a new tab or window to interact with Yahoo!. In fact, you don't even have to go to the Yahoo! home site to sign in.

Instead, click the Sign In button on the toolbar and select either And Go To Yahoo! Mail or And Go To My Yahoo!. The third option on this menu directs you to the customization options for the Yahoo! Toolbar. Here, you can add buttons to the toolbar from the following categories: Search & Navigation, Personal Tools, News, Sports, Other, Shopping & Commerce, Entertainment, and Communities. Once you've selected your preferred buttons, Click Change Layout so you can arrange your button order. Click Add More Buttons if you're not quite satisfied with your current number, or click Finished and Yahoo! will notify you that your button changes are saved.

Facebook Toolbar

www.facebook.com/apps/application.php?id=2215974432

Because active members of Facebook rely on timely notifications and communication, it only makes sense to add a



Facebook extension to a browser. Once you log on to Facebook from the toolbar, you can start searching for friends, access Quick Links (Groups, Events, Profile, Inbox, and Photos), and share media. By clicking the friends sidebar, you'll instantly view recent status updates from all of your friends.

The notifications bar shows Pokes (a fun, virtual way to remind someone you want to stay in contact), newly added friends, and messages. If you want to stay constantly connected to your social network, the Facebook Toolbar is one place to start.

SimilarWeb

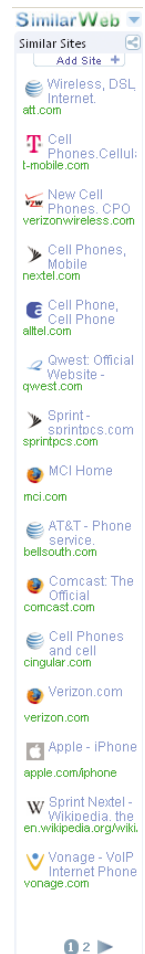
www.similarweb.com

When you're browsing search engine results, it's sometimes difficult to find which sites are most applicable to

your search query. SimilarWeb functions as a Web

search assistant that shows Web sites with content directly related to the site you're currently viewing. So, when you're visiting one site listed in the search results, the SimilarWeb sidebar will display suggested sites that would help you narrow your search much more quickly.

Use the Thumbs Up or Thumbs Down functions to agree or disagree with SimilarWeb's suggestions. Once you get used to SimilarWeb's filtering process, you're allowed to add your own similar sites with the Add Site button. The SimilarWeb sidebar features Thumbnails, List, and Small Icons view. To hide the sidebar, click the SW button located on the Navigation Toolbar.



Outfit Your Browser

Toolbars are designed to get information more quickly, search the Web easily, and make browsing less confusing for any Internet surfer. Once you've decided which browser toolbars will help you surf more efficiently, you'll wonder why you didn't add them sooner.

BY JOANNA SAFFORD

Browser Troubleshooting

Fix Common Problems With Firefox & IE

Your Internet browser is at the center of every task you perform online. Through your browser, you access your email, manage your online bank account, research home improvement projects, check the news and weather forecasts, and buy products from online stores. Because you rely so heavily on your Internet browser, it can be frustrating when it doesn't work properly. To keep your browser up and running, we offer solutions for many common Firefox and Internet Explorer problems and error messages.

Error Message: "Server Not Found" or "Unable To Connect"

Translation: You recently upgraded Firefox, and now, when you attempt to open your Web browser, you receive one of the above error messages.

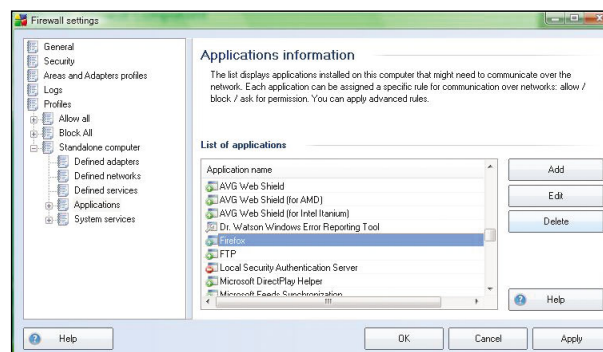
Solution: Your firewall may be blocking the updated version of Firefox, even if you think the firewall is disabled. In order to use the updated version of Firefox, you

will have to configure your firewall software to allow Firefox access to the Internet.

If you are using AVG Internet Security 8.5, for example, go to the Tools menu and choose Firewall Settings. Under the Profiles item on the left menu, you should find a user profile (by default, it is called "Standalone Computer"). Expand the list for the user profile and choose the Applications item. A list of applications will fill the window on the right. Find and select Firefox and then click Delete on the right side of the window. If you have more than one user profile, repeat these steps for each one and then click Apply and OK.

If you are using Windows Firewall, open the Security Center from the Control Panel. Click

Windows Firewall. Under the General tab, uncheck the box next to Don't Allow Exceptions. In Windows Vista, open the Security Center, click Windows Firewall, click Change Settings, and uncheck the box next to Block All Incoming Connections. In both WinXP and Vista, click the Exceptions tab and delete Mozilla Firefox from the list of programs, if it is listed. Click OK and try again to use Firefox to browse the Internet.

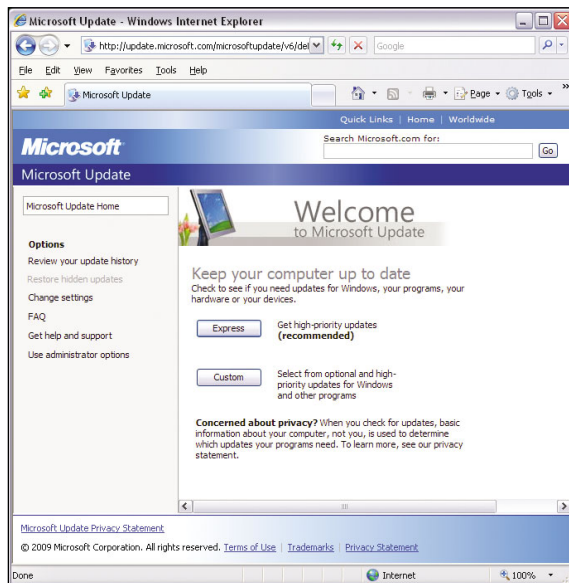


Connection errors may be caused by your firewall, which could be blocking Firefox's access to the Internet.

Error Message: Internet Explorer 8 Could Not Be Installed

Translation: The latest version of Internet Explorer will not install on your computer, and you cannot use it.

Solution: Internet Explorer 8 is compatible with Windows Vista, Windows XP SP2 (Service Pack 2), and SP3 (Service Pack 3). You may need to run Windows Update so that you're sure to have the latest updates or service packs that IE8 needs to install. There are two ways to access Windows Update. In Vista, go to the Start menu, select All Programs, and choose Windows Update from the list. The resulting window will show which updates are available, and you can view information about each update by clicking View Available Updates. You can also install updates directly from the window by clicking Install Updates.



You may have to update your computer in order for Internet Explorer 8 to have the necessary components to install.

You can also access Windows Update by navigating to update.microsoft.com. Windows Update will automatically scan your computer for needed updates. To install the most important updates, simply click the Express button.

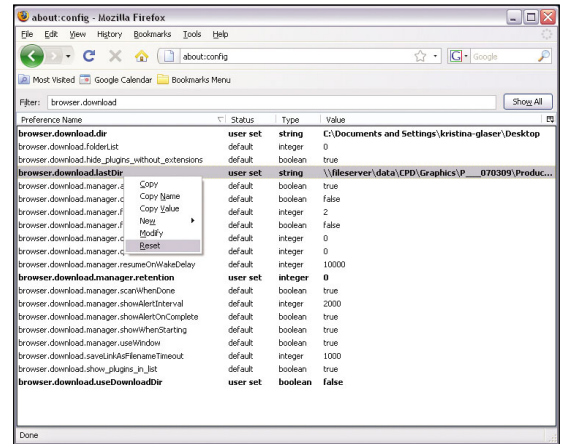
If updating your computer doesn't allow you to install IE8, try updating your antivirus or anti-malware program. Check your protection software's Help section if you are unsure of how to update. You can also try temporarily disabling your antivirus or anti-malware program while you install IE8. To ensure that your computer is still protected during this time, however, verify that the Windows Firewall is active. From the Control Panel, navigate to the Security Center and choose Windows Firewall. In WinXP, turn the firewall on or off by clicking the radio button next to each option. In Vista, click Turn Windows Firewall On Or Off on the left menu and then click the appropriate radio button to turn the firewall on or off.

Try installing IE8 again. If the installation is successful, be sure to reactivate your antivirus or anti-malware program so that your computer will be protected.

Problem: You are unable to download or save files in Firefox.

Translation: You want to view and save the pictures of your grandchildren that you received via email, but it's not working.

Solution: There are many possible solutions that can help you get your downloads back on track. For starters, try clearing your download history. In Firefox, go to the Tools menu and select Downloads. In the Downloads window, click the Clear List button in the lower-left corner. To



If you can't download or save files in Firefox, you may have to reset certain items in the Firefox Download folder.

configure Firefox to never retain your download history, which may help prevent future download trouble, go to the Tools menu and choose Options. Under the Privacy section, uncheck the box next to Remember What I've Downloaded. Click OK to close the Options window.

If you are still unable to download or save files, try choosing a different folder in which to download files. Go to Tools and choose Options. Under the Main section, locate the Downloads area and click the radio button next to Save Files To. Click the Browse button to the right and choose where you want to save downloaded files. Try downloading a file to see if this corrects the issue.

If not, you can try resetting the download folder by typing **about:config** in the Address Bar and pressing ENTER. When a warranty warning appears, click the I'll Be Careful, I Promise! box. On the next page, type **browser.download** in the Filter box found at the top of the page. From the list of entries, you must reset the value of specific items that have a status of "user set." Look for **browser.download.dir**, **browser.download.downloadDir**, **browser.download.folderList**, and **browser.download.lastDir**, and **browser.download.useDownloadDir**. To reset these values, right-click their names and choose Reset.

If these solutions do not fix the problem, you may also try configuring your antivirus or anti-malware program to allow the download or temporarily disable your security program while you attempt to download a file.

Error Message: Internet Explorer Cannot Display The Webpage.

Translation: While using IE8, a particular page will not load. The site you are trying to access may be temporarily unavailable due to maintenance or other issues.

Solution: The first step is to navigate to another Web site and see whether it loads. If other Web sites load, chances are the first site is simply experiencing difficulties and will be available after a short while. If

other Web sites do not load, the next step is to reset your modem or wireless router. Remove the power cord, wait 10 seconds, and then plug the power cable back into the device. If this does not correct the issue, restart your computer and reset your modem or router a second time.

Deleting your browsing history may also help correct this issue. In IE8, go to the Tools menu and select Delete Browsing History. Select the checkboxes next to Temporary Internet Files, Cookies, and History. Click the Delete button and then close the Delete Browsing History dialog box.

Like many of the problems already mentioned, it may help to disable your firewall or antivirus program or configure it to allow IE access to the Internet. Check the Help section of your security program if you are unsure of how to disable or configure your antivirus software.

If you continue to have problems connecting to Web sites, you

may have to call your ISP (Internet service provider) and ask for help. Your ISP may be having difficulties that are affecting your connection, or you may be having problems with your modem.

Problem: While browsing the Internet using Firefox, you notice that the navigation buttons are missing from the toolbar.

Translation: You cannot use the Back or Forward buttons to navigate, and the Stop, Reload, and Home buttons are also missing.

Solution: If you cannot see any of the usual navigation buttons, it could be that the Navigation Toolbar is hidden. To show the Navigation Toolbar, click the View menu and select Toolbars. Make sure there is a check

mark next to Navigation Toolbar. If there isn't, simply click to select and show the toolbar.

If the Navigation Toolbar or buttons are still missing, try restoring the default toolbar. Go to View, select the Toolbars menu, and select Customize. Click Restore Default Set found on the bottom right. Click Done to save the changes and check to see if the toolbar has reappeared. If not, the next step is to reset the toolbar. Start Firefox in Safe Mode by going to the Start menu, selecting All Programs, and choosing Mozilla Firefox (Safe Mode) from the Mozilla Firefox folder. Firefox will open and show a Safe Mode dialog box. Select the box next to Reset Toolbars And Controls and then click Make Changes And Restart.

Problem: When you attempt to load a Web page, you receive one of the following error messages: "A Runtime Error has occurred. Do you wish to debug? Y/N," or "Do you wish to debug this Web page? This Web page contains errors that might prevent it from displaying or working correctly," or "Runtime Error! Program: C:\Program Files\Internet Explorer\iexplore.exe. This application has requested the Runtime to terminate it in an unusual way."

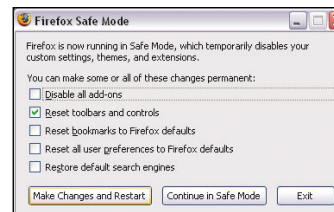
Translation: These errors are known as script errors and are usually caused by a problem with the JavaScript or VBScript coding on the Web page.

Solution: In most cases, you can simply click No if a pop-up box asks you to debug the Web page, but to prevent script errors from reappearing, you'll have to disable script debugging. In Internet Explorer, go to Tools, click Internet Options, and select the Advanced tab. Under Settings, find the Browsing section. Put a check mark next to Disable Script Debugging (Internet Explorer) and Disable Script Debugging (Other). Then, uncheck the box next to Display A Notification About Every Script Error.

To check whether this solution solved the problem, try reloading the Web page that caused the error. If the page loads without error and the runtime script error doesn't appear, then the issue is solved.



If a Web site won't display in IE, deleting your browsing history can give you a clean slate.



Resetting the toolbar should make Firefox's navigation buttons reappear.

Next Steps

If the solutions provided don't correct your browser issue, check the Mozilla support page (support.mozilla.com) or the Microsoft support page (support.microsoft.com) for more information about your specific problem. ■

BY KRIS GLASER

Online

Quick Studies
How-To

Claim Your Spot On Google Profiles

Google Profiles

Beginner

Facebook is the reigning king of social networking sites, but Google has at least a pinky toe in the water with its new Profiles experiment.

Google Profiles is not a full-blown social networking site meant to keep friends up-to-date on one another's every move. It's more of a directory of standardized personal home pages that provides a convenient way to find folks (at least those who want to be found) and then visit the actual social sites they do use. How much information you include in your Profile is up to you.



Google Profiles can be your calling card on the Web, where friends can contact you or see what you are up to at networking sites across the Internet.

First Look

You can see Profiles in action at www.google.com/profiles. In the lower-right corner of the page, you'll find several links to existing Profiles users. Click a few to get an idea of

what your own Profiles page could look like.

The typical Profile includes a few sections. Up top is the person's name, along with his or her occupation and city. Below that is a stream of pictures from either Flickr or Google's own Picasa. The main section of the page includes more detailed info about the Profile user. Links on the side lead to different social networking sites used by that person.

Profiles also show up on regular Google search results pages. Rather than the top of the results, however, you'll find Profile matches at the bottom of the first page. If the name you are searching for comes back with just one Profiles hit, you'll see a picture at the bottom of the page with a link to that person's Google Profile. A more common name leads to a Google Profiles heading at the bottom of the search results with multiple pictures and links.

Homestead

To claim your own Google Profile, head to the main Profiles page. Click the Create My Profile button. If you're already signed into a Google service, such as Gmail, your name and other information may be partially filled in on the form on the next page.

You can change any of the information, fill in whatever blanks you are comfortable sharing, and delete those you would rather not publish. Note the checkbox that asks whether you want to allow people to contact you. Either way, Google keeps your email address private.

Below the basic info section of the About Me tab is another section called A Little Personality. This is where you can enter some fun answers to a couple of questions or add a short description of yourself.

The Links section toward the bottom of the page is probably the most important part of a Google Profile because it lets you add URLs for the various sites where you post pictures, blog entries, up-to-the-minute status reports, and other information commonly shared on the Internet these days. Google provides a suggestion or two of what sites you might want to include in the Links section. If you use Google Reader, for instance, Google might include a link to add your shared Reader items to the list on your Profile.

Below Google's suggested links is a form to add your own custom links. This is how you might include a link to Facebook, for example, or your own page at YouTube, Twitter, or a host of other content and networking sites. Enter the URL for your blog, your Flickr feed, or, if you're relatively famous, your Wikipedia entry. It's up to you.

Choose Carefully

The bottom of the Profiles setup page includes one more choice to make: the address of your Profile. Google suggests a URL based on your Google account ID. However, that ID might be the same as your Gmail address, assuming you use Gmail. In other words, someone might be able to guess your email address from your Profile address. If you don't want that to happen, you can change your Profile address. However, choose carefully—you can only pick a customized Profile address once.

Google Profiles is one more way to build an online presence. With so many similar tools littering the online roadside, it's hard to say if Profiles will catch on in a big way. With Google behind it, however, your Profile is bound to be accessible—and accessible for editing—indefinitely. ■

BY ALAN PHELPS

Microsoft PowerPoint 2007

Formatting Photos

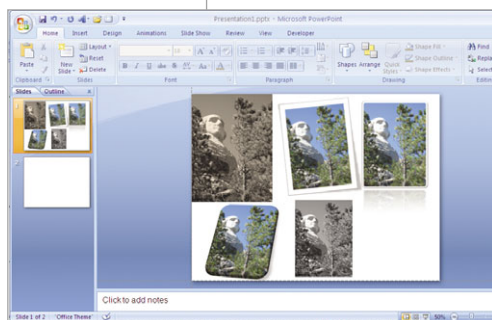
Presentation

Intermediate

WinXP/Vista

Digital photography teaches us to think of photos more as material rather than finished products. Many of us are proficient enough with photo-editing software to remove red-eye effects, brighten dark images, or click buttons to adjust contrast. But even if you've never touched photo-editing software, you can still use PowerPoint's built-in imaging-editing functions to pump up photos on slides. PowerPoint's photo tools wouldn't satisfy a sophisticated digital photographer, but they're good enough to pull off some pretty cool looks in presentations.

PowerPoint's photo tools become available as soon as you click a picture on a slide. Click the Picture Tools tab that appears above the Ribbon to reveal a new Format tab loaded with accessories for customizing a photo's look. (Changing a photo on a PowerPoint slide affects only the photo within the presentation. There are no changes to the original photo you selected.)



PowerPoint's built-in photo-editing tools let you quickly try different looks for your images.

Change The Core Look

The first batch of tools on the far left affects the photo's core appearance. Under Brightness, a drop-down list of gradations lets you make the image look brighter or

darker in 10% increments. Under Contrast, another drop-down list works in the same way. With all of PowerPoint's photo tools, you'll see the tool's effect on the photo when you rest your mouse pointer over a tool option, making it convenient to experiment with different looks. If you want finer control over the image's brightness or contrast, click Picture Corrections Options in the Brightness or Contrast drop-down list and use the sliders or number boxes to make more precise adjustments.

The Recolor tool lets you get artsy by applying a sepia tone, grayscale effect (which you'd probably see as more like black-and-white than PowerPoint's actual black-and-white setting), and many accent colors. At the bottom of the Recolor drop-down list, you'll find the Set Transparent Color option. You'll have to play with this one a bit to see how its Andy Warhol-like effects can work for you.

At any time, you can back out of misguided changes by using the Undo option or by selecting

Reset Picture on the ribbon. Keep in mind that the latter undoes *all* of the formatting you applied, including any initial sizing you may have done immediately after importing the image.

The nearby Compress Pictures button shrinks your presentation's size by throwing out extra data in photos. Click the button and choose Options to indicate how much quality you're willing to sacrifice in the name of smaller files. (Most of the time, you won't notice a difference even if you choose the lowest quality setting.)

Fix The Frame

The next group of tools covers the elements surrounding the photo on the slide. You can add a variety of frames. Picture Shape lets you insert photos into any of the endless shapes PowerPoint has in its library. Once you add the shape, note that you can usually use handles to adjust its shape, revealing or hiding various parts of the photo.

Picture Border lets you add your own frame of sorts by adding a surrounding line of the color and thickness of your choosing. Picture Effects provides a huge variety of choices for presenting photos with shadows with effects such as beveled edges. Show restraint with these features unless you want your slides to look like the work of an overeager department store photo studio. Also, keep in mind that you may have to go back to the brightness and contrast controls if you choose an unusual angle. Some of them significantly alter a photo's look.

Arrange & Crop

Many users get stumped by photo ordering, which addresses which image appears on the "top" of a pile when several photos overlap. To address this situation, use the Bring To Front and Send To Back buttons to adjust the layering.

Finally, on the far right side of the Format tab, use the Crop tools to focus on the important parts of a photo. Click Crop to produce handles you can drag to hide parts of photos. The cropped portions remain (unless you use the Compress Pictures tool and leave the Delete Cropped Areas Of Pictures box checked [checked by default]), so you can restore them to the view if you change your mind. ■

BY TREVOR MEERS

Roxio Creator 2009

Quick Studies
How-To

All About Playlists

Digital Media
Suite

Intermediate

WinXP/Vista

Roxio Creator 2009 isn't a music player, but it can perform many of the same tasks with music files as it does with photo and video files, such as organizing, tagging, and editing. In this article, we'll focus on one aspect of organizing music: grouping songs into playlists.

Create A Playlist

Creator offers you two main ways to create a playlist. The first is via Media Manager, which lets you create WPL playlists, the format used by Windows Media Player for playlists. Open Media Manager and select the My Media icon in the left

panel. Click My Playlists in the list of My Media and click the Create A New Playlist icon. Name your playlist, and with this playlist highlighted, click the Add To Playlist icon. In the Add To Playlist window, browse your hard drive. When you find a music file, click it

and then click the Add button. Repeat this process as many times as desired.

Another way to create a playlist is to use the Music-Audio tab of Creator. Select Burn MP3 CDs. In the left panel, locate a file using the scroll list, the Search box, or the Quick Find feature. When you find a file, highlight the file and drag it to the right panel. When done, click the Save As Playlist button, which lets you save the file as an M3U file, the default format of Winamp and other media players.

Equalize Song Volumes

If you've ever created a playlist of songs from different sources, you know that one commonly occurring (and irksome) feature is that not all the songs play at the same volume. Take care of this annoyance by using Creator's normalization tool.

Click the Burn Audio CDs link from the Music-Audio tab. Search for individual tunes or playlists in the left panel and drag them to the right panel. Before clicking the Save As Playlist button, go to the Tools menu and select Options. Select Create Audio CD from the left panel, and in the right panel, check the box Normalize Tracks To A

Consistent Level. Click OK and save your playlist. The default value for sound normalization is 90, and there is no preview, so you may need to experiment with the best value for each playlist.

Make Beat Transitions

Suppose you're creating a dance mix, and you don't want to hear silence between songs. Beat-matched Music Mixes count the beats per minute of each track and speeds up or slows down the end of one song so that it matches up with the beats of the next, with no audible break between the two.

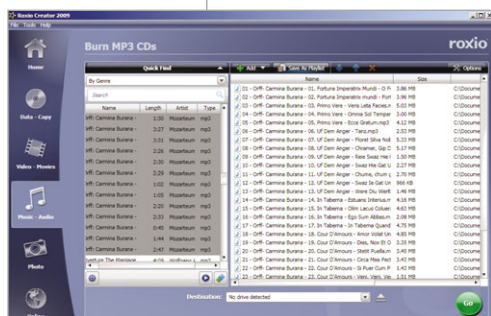
From the Music-Audio tab, click Create Music Disc Projects. In the Roxio Music Disc Creator – Untitled Project window, click Audio CD under Project Type and Add Audio Tracks under Add To Project. Use the Media Selector window to locate tracks in the left pane; click them in the right pane and click the Add button. Name your playlist via the Rename Button and then click Beatmatch. The tool scans the files and arranges them from fewest to most beats per minute, and you have the option to rearrange songs, and more.

Create Playlists Automatically

Can't decide what songs go together? Creator gives you the option of creating a playlist from a single file; it then chooses tunes that complement that song. (These steps assume you've already built your Creator library via Media Manager.)

Click Create Playlists Automatically from the Music-Audio tab. Click Add to browse for the seed song, and once you've chosen it, click Continue. Select Begin Track Identification Process (unless you've already identified tracks, in which case you'll choose Run AutoMix). In the next window, select Skip This Step And Continue With Track Identification. When you have enough songs "identified"—the number will depend upon the size of your music library—click Stop And Review Results. Click Done to add the tracks to the database, and in the AutoMix window, click Save As Playlist. Name your playlist and click OK. Lastly, a word of caution: The first time you use this tool, the identification process may take several hours, depending upon the size of your music library. ■

BY HEIDI V. ANDERSON



You can use the Burn MP3 CDs tab of Roxio Creator to create music playlists that are stored on your computer's hard drive.

Browsers

One Browser, One Web Site, Two Accounts

Browser Sessions

Advanced

By default, most Web browsers maintain the same session when opening new tabs or windows. That means any cookies created in the original window or tab will be carried on to the new window or tab. If you're already signed into Gmail in one window, for instance, browsing to Gmail in a new window will result in two windows displaying the same account with the same login ID and password.

It makes sense that Web browsers would not automatically launch new sessions. For example, say you are browsing an online store such as Amazon.com. Even though you might want to look at different products in different windows, you'll want everything you select to go to the same shopping cart. Operating multiple windows with multiple sessions could lead to confusion or even accidental purchases.

Sometimes, though, you might want to leave those old cookies behind and access a different account (on the same Web site) without closing your session with the first account. It might be especially handy if you have two Web mail accounts at the same site and you want to be able to flip between them without constantly entering your usernames and passwords.

The easiest way to get around the session-sharing behavior is to use two different brands of browsers on the same computer. For example, you could log into Gmail account A via Internet Explorer and then log into Gmail account B via Firefox. However, if you insist on using a single browser to open two accounts (for the same Web site) simultaneously, you can. We'll show you how to do this with Internet Explorer 8 (and how to do something similar with Firefox).

Internet Explorer 8

Internet Explorer 8 makes it simple to open multiple sessions in multiple windows. It's not an obvious feature, but it's easy enough to do once you know the ability exists.

From any IE8 window, first press ALT on your keyboard to make the main IE Menu Bar temporarily appear. Next, choose File and then select New Session. A new window will appear that looks like any other IE8 window. In fact, it is like any other window, but this one does not share the same cookies as the existing window.

You can simply close the new browser window when you're finished with it. Unless you use the New Session command, any other new browser windows you open will behave as normal using the same session cookies.

Firefox

You can get similar functionality in Firefox with an extension named CookieSwap. Head to <https://addons.mozilla.org> and search for "CookieSwap" to find the download page. Click the Add To Firefox button to download the add-on.

After installing the add-on, CookieSwap shows a small green icon in the browser's bottom Status Bar. Next to the icon, you'll see the title Profile1. All of the cookies in your current session are saved in the Profile1 group. To switch, right-click the icon or title and select another, such as Profile2.

CookieSwap has a few bugs to work out. On one of our test machines—admittedly, one with many other Firefox extensions installed—CookieSwap seemed to sometimes forget cookies, forcing us to sign in multiple times. On a clean install of Firefox, CookieSwap worked as advertised. Switching from Profile1 to Profile2 and back again swapped automatically between two different Gmail accounts.

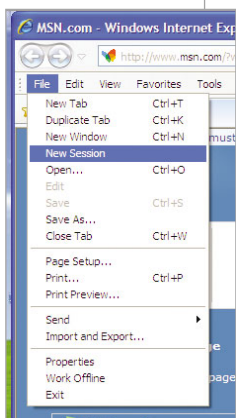
Gmail Manager

Another Firefox extension, Gmail Manager, is a good solution if the main reason you want to open different sessions is to use multiple Gmail accounts. Search the Firefox add-ons site for "Gmail Manager" to try it out.

With Gmail Manager installed, you'll see a small gray Gmail icon in the lower-right corner of the browser. Right-click the icon and choose Preferences to set up your accounts. Click the Add button, enter your username and password for the first account, and then click OK. Enter the info for your next account. Repeat as necessary.

The Gmail Manager icon will display how many new messages await in the selected account. Right-click the icon and select another account to switch; click the icon to open that account. You can't sign into multiple accounts at the same time, but it is extremely easy to switch between them. ■

BY ALAN PHELPS



IE8 can open multiple browsing sessions, allowing you to sign into the same Web site with different IDs simultaneously.

Microsoft Word 2007

Strip Formatting When Pasting Text

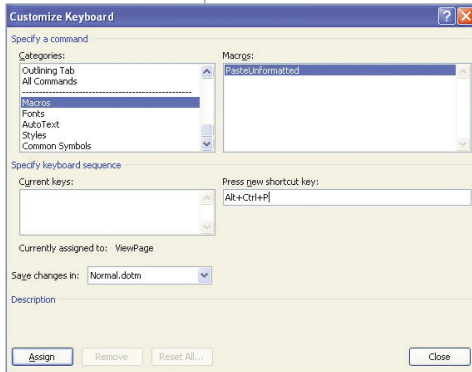
Word Processing

Advanced

WinXP/Vista

It's always been easy to copy and paste text from most Windows applications into a Word document. You can simply highlight text in another document, press CTRL-C, and then paste the text into a Word document using CTRL-V.

The problem with this is that other apps have their own ideas about formatting, which are then copied into Word. Sometimes it's to your benefit to retain this formatting, but in most cases, it would be easier if you could paste without formatting. We will show you two ways to copy text and paste it into a Word document stripped of formatting.



You can assign a keyboard combination to your macro in the Customize Keyboard dialog box.

Use Paste Special

The first way to copy unformatted text into a Word document is to use the Paste Special function on the Home tab. Highlight the text you wish to copy and press CTRL-C. Position the cursor in the Word document where you want to insert it. Click

the arrow on the Paste button and choose Paste Special. In the dialog box, click Unformatted Text and OK. The text appears in the Word document without the formatting of the original.

You may find that, depending on the source you copied from, some characteristics of the text remain despite using the unformatted option. For example, paragraph marks and extra spaces may be retained. After you've pasted the text, check to see the results by clicking the Show/Hide button in the Paragraph group on the Home tab. This shows you hidden formatting in the document and will give you an idea of what you need to do to make the pasted text consistent with what is already present.

If you find yourself using Paste Special often, you can add it to the Quick Access Toolbar by right-clicking it and choosing Add To Quick Access Toolbar. Every time you click the button, you need to go through the dialog box to click Unformatted Text and OK. But there is a simpler way: a macro.

Paste Using A Macro

By creating a macro, you can paste unformatted text using a simple key combination instead of

going through a dialog box. Although this requires opening the Visual Basic Editor, you don't need to know Visual Basic to perform this task. We will give you the simple code to do it.

Go to the View tab and click the Macros button (not the arrow) in the Macro group. In the Name box in the Macros dialog box, type **PasteSpecial** (do not put a space between the words Paste and Special) and press ENTER. The Microsoft Visual Basic editor opens. Delete all of the text in the code editor and type or copy the text from this article's sidebar ("PasteSpecial Macro") into it.

Once you've added that text to Visual Basic Editor, click File and Save Normal and close the Editor. You now have a macro that will paste unformatted text into a Word document. Next, you need to assign that macro to a key combination.

Click the Office button and choose Word Options. Click Customize on the left and then click the Customize button next to the words Keyboard Shortcuts. In the Categories area on the left, choose Macros. Select the PasteSpecial macro on the right. Click in the Press New Shortcut Key area. Choose a combination, such as ALT-CTRL-P. (Make sure not to choose a key combination that you already use often.) Simply press those keys to create the new command. Click Assign, Close, and OK.

Try the macro by copying some formatted text. Click in the Word document where you want to insert the text and press the key combination you assigned (such as ALT-CTRL-P). The unformatted text is copied into the document.

Having the option to quickly paste unformatted text into a document makes performing a fundamental operation in Word that much easier. ■

BY TOM HANCOCK

PASTESPECIAL MACRO

You'll need to enter some text into Visual Basic Editor to create the PasteSpecial Macro. The code must be entered exactly as it appears below. (If you are copying from the Web, copy the text to Notepad first to remove any formatting and then copy into the editor.)

Sub PasteSpecial ()

Selection.PasteSpecial DataType:=wdPasteText

End Sub

Quick Tips

Secrets For Succeeding In Common Tasks

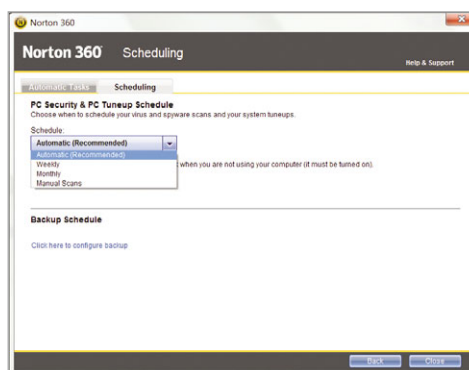
BY STEPHEN J. BIGELOW

Security Software

Question: Will my security software still scan on schedule if the PC is in Standby or Hibernate mode or turned off?

Answer: No. The system can have its display or hard drives powered down but must otherwise be running normally for scheduled events to run. The trick for scheduled events is to choose a time when the system is on but idle. Early mornings, lunch times, and later evening hours are often the best choices depending on how you use the system. This way, the

scheduled event (a virus scan in your case) can execute without impairing the performance of your other applications.



Configure your security software to perform automated scans during periods when the system is idle.

For a product such as Symantec's Norton 360 (\$79.99; www.symantec.com), the scheduling is a choice of Automatic, Weekly, Monthly, or Manual Scans (no scheduled scans). To change your preference, open the Norton 360 panel and select Settings, Task Scheduling, and click the Scheduling tab. Select the preferred schedule from the drop-down menu.

Printers

Question: How can I get more life from my ink cartridges?

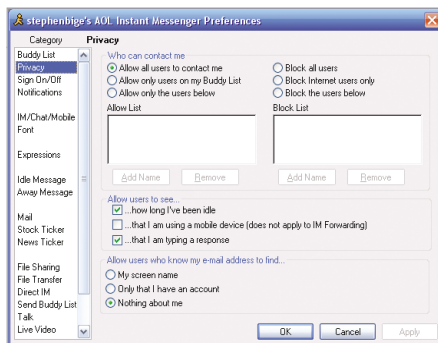
Answer: There are several ways to extend the life of your expensive ink cartridges. First, avoid printing unless you absolutely have to. Many people are in the habit of printing images and documents for review because they find tangible pages easier to read. Use the computer instead. For example,

view your documents using Microsoft Word or Adobe Acrobat or consolidate your image collection onto a CD or DVD rather than printing photos for a traditional photo album.

If you must print, use the printer's economy or ink-saving mode that is normally selected through the printer's Properties or in the Print Setup dialog box of your applications.

This typically produces clear, low-contrast print quality, but it's ideal if you need to check the composition of a draft. Use the normal print mode to render your final printing. Finally, some printers can use refilled/recycled ink cartridges, which are usually a bit less expensive than original manufacturers' cartridges. However, the quality of refilled ink cartridges can vary depending on the cartridge itself.

Instant Messaging



Configure AIM preferences and privacy settings to restrict the users who you receive chat requests from.

Question: I always get deluged with instant messages when I enter my favorite IM (instant message) program. Is there any way to stop the flood of messages until I get settled in on AIM?

Answer: There are a few things that you can do to reduce the noise once you log on. From the main AIM window, click Setup, Preferences, and select the IM/Chat/Mobile menu from the list. You can opt to Block All Incoming Chat Invitations. You can also switch over to the Privacy menu and choose to Allow Only Users On My Buddy List or Allow Only The Users Below and enter the usernames allowed to contact you in the Allow List. Click Apply and OK.

Vishing

Question: What is vishing, and how does it differ from phishing?

Answer: Vishing is basically phishing through VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol). Rather than sending you bogus emails and trying to scam unsuspecting recipients to visit malicious Web sites, scammers use automated voicemail equipment and cheap VoIP services to scam by phone. The idea is that telephone calls are inherently trusted more than emails, so the bogus call typically explains that your account (usually a bank or credit card account) has been compromised, and you need to enter your account

number and other personal information to unlock your account. Of course, the scammers will invariably use your information to perpetrate identity fraud.

Remember that no organization should ever request sensitive account information over the phone. If you receive such a call, and actually do have an account at the institution mentioned in the phone message, hang up and contact the customer service number of the institution directly to inform it of the situation. The institution's security experts may request information about the bogus call to help them track the culprits.

Optical Mice

Question: Do optical mice need to be cleaned? If so, how should they be cleaned if there's no moving ball?

Answer: Optical mice work by shining a light source and receiving any light reflected from the surface. The texture of the surface breaks up the light to

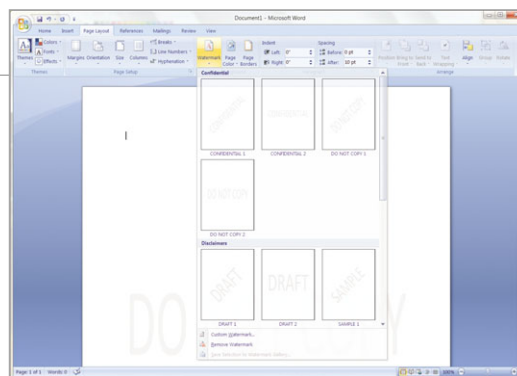
produce the pulses that move the mouse cursor. Although optical mice are more reliable than a traditional ball mouse, dust and debris will still accumulate under and around the sensor. This will eventually disrupt the optical signal or block it entirely. Fortunately, you do not need to

disassemble an optical mouse. Simply use a clean cloth lightly dampened with water to wipe any crud from the mouse bottom and around the sensor. Perform a periodic routine cleaning to keep the mouse working properly.

Microsoft Word 2007

Question: What is a watermark, and how should I use one in a document?

Answer: A watermark is a unique code or message designed to appear in the background of your document. Microsoft Word 2007 supports watermarks. With the existing (or new) document open, select Page Layout along the top menu and click Watermark in the Page Background area. You can select from a series of common watermarks or create your own. Remember to keep your watermark clear and simple.



Microsoft Word 2007 supports the introduction of watermarks for special identification or classification of your documents.

UPS

Question: Is there a way to turn off the obnoxious screech from the UPS (uninterruptible power supply) every time I have a power problem?

Answer: Larger server-sized UPS systems will often incorporate

an alarm button or provide some type of management controls that can silence the alarm. However, most consumer UPS systems will produce an alarm when AC power fails and then continue to produce the alarm at regular intervals until AC

power is restored, the UPS battery is exhausted, or until the UPS switch is turned off. If the alarm is particularly obnoxious, go ahead and turn off the UPS once your work is saved and the PC is properly powered down.

Hard Drives & SSDs

For the last couple of decades, the most practical place to keep your data has been a hard drive. Its spinning disks and moving read/write heads may seem a little anachronistic these days, but its continually updated materials and design consistently advance the state of the art.

Twenty years ago, few of us even knew what a gigabyte (labeled as GB; equal to 1,024MB) was, let alone a terabyte (labeled as TB; equal to 1,024GB). Today, with 2TB drives available, it's nothing short of amazing how far the technology has come. Consider that a 10MB hard drive was a coveted commodity once upon a time.

Hard drives still remain the most inexpensive mass storage devices. They're fairly speedy, too, in the scheme of things.

On the other hand, SSDs (solid-state drives) are poised to take away some of the old guard's market share. Some of these flash memory-based storage units are much faster than any magnetic media-based hard drive, although none has been able to even approach the older drive's extremely low cost per GB. Yet.



3.5-Inch Internal Drive

This is the standard form factor (physical size) of hard drives for use inside desktop computers. It's relatively heavy and fragile, but it supplies the most bang for the buck regarding capacity and speed.

The 3.5-inch part refers to the traditional diameter of the hard disks, or platters, inside. You can get a rough idea of the read and write performance of a particular drive from its platters' rotational speed, such as 7,200 or 10,000rpm (the faster, the better). Newer drives are generally faster than older ones, too.

2.5-Inch Internal Drive

This smaller type of hard drive was designed for notebook computers, but versions have since found their way into iPods, servers, and even car stereos. Although 2.5-inch drives can't hold as much data as less expensive 3.5-inch models, they're more resilient to physical shocks and don't require as much power to run.

This photo shows the silver-hued top platter of a typical hard drive (many models have more than one disk). The read-write heads are at the tip of the metal arm that resembles the Eiffel Tower; this armature swings back and forth, never touching the disks.



3.5- and 2.5-Inch External Drives

These drives' enclosures tip you off that they're made for use outside a computer. They send data back and forth to a PC using USB, eSATA (external Serial Advanced Technology Attachment), FireWire, or Ethernet cables.

Although the drives depicted here are "ruggedized," or protected against bumps and bruises with special cases, you should leave the majority of 3.5-inch external drives at home. For the most part, only 2.5-inch and smaller drives are durable enough to survive a life of travel in a notebook bag or luggage.

SSD

Even though they have no disks, solid-state drives are sold as 2.5-inch, 3.5-inch, 1.8-inch, and smaller models, just like hard drives of the same physical sizes. Because SSDs use flash memory and have no moving parts, they can access random bits of data in a fraction of the time it would take for a hard drive's heads to find them on spinning disks.

SSDs also win on physical toughness, cooler operation, power consumption, and noise level (none). However, even entry-level models still cost several times more per GB compared to similar hard drives.



What To Do When Your Monitor Displays Distorted Colors

Don't get mad. Get even. When colors mix up, the results can be maddening. Even though the problem is obvious, it's not always so easy to find a solution. Connection problems, hardware trouble, operating system settings, and software malfunctions can all contribute to weird tints, distorted hues, or washed-out colors.

Basics

Display technology isn't uniform, and not every solution applies to every possible system. We'll generally assume an LCD monitor with a VGA (Video Graphics Array) or DVI (Digital Visual Interface) connection, though we'll point out areas applicable to CRT (cathode-ray tube) displays and/or HDMI (High-Definition Multimedia Interface) connections where appropriate.

Start with some of the basic troubleshooting steps you'd take when any issue arises. First, check your connections. Remove the monitor cable from both the PC and the display. Look for bent or broken pins (on VGA and DVI connectors) or damage to the metal frame (on HDMI plugs). Replace the cable if you find any. Otherwise, reconnect the cable and make sure to get a firm fit at each end. Use the thumbscrews or snap-downs to secure the connection and prevent it from coming loose in the future. If you've recently installed or moved your video card, check to make sure it's sitting firmly in the correct slot on the motherboard.

If the connection isn't the problem, try restarting both the monitor and

the machine. Shut down the computer, turn off the monitor, wait a couple minutes, power back on the display, and start up the machine again. A simple reboot often resolves whatever issue you're facing. If possible, test the monitor on a different computer or try attaching a different monitor to the PC in question.

Finally, if you are using an older CRT monitor, check the area around the monitor and along the length of its cable connection to the PC. Components that contain strong

magnets or create electromagnetic fields sometimes create on-screen distortions, including warped colors. Remove any speakers or power supplies near your monitor and see if that clears things ups.

Monitor Settings

The monitor's on-screen menu is the next place to look. Every make and model has a different layout and slightly different options, but they all share some common features relevant



to color settings. Check your model's users guide for detailed instructions on navigating the menu. Usually, though, you can find your way around using buttons on the front or side of the display chassis.

Open up the menu and check the brightness, contrast, and color settings. Brightness (also called black level) controls how much light the display puts off, and therefore, how bright or dark your colors appear. Contrast determines how much difference exists between the darkest and lightest areas of the screen. If contrast is too low, colors may wash out or blend together. Some on-screen menus present color settings as color temperature or saturation or hue. Some also offer preset color modes (such as Theater or Scenery). There aren't universal rules for the right option, though Normal or Standard are always safe bets. Try changing settings one at a time to see if each corrects your problem. If your monitor offers custom color balancing, check the levels assigned to red, green, and blue. Too much or too little of any will lead to very strange coloration. If your monitor has an option to restore factory default settings, that may be the best option available.

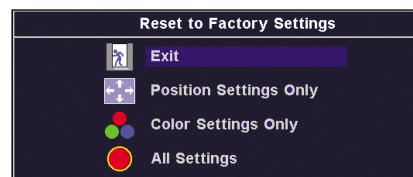
If you're using a CRT, select the Degauss menu option. Degaussing clears away stray magnetism that can build up within the screen and distort the picture. LCDs aren't subject to the phenomenon, so degaussing isn't necessary.

At some point, especially if your display's colors have degraded slowly over time or if trouble keeps coming back, you'll have to consider replacing the monitor altogether. Before you go that far, however, make sure the blame doesn't lie elsewhere.

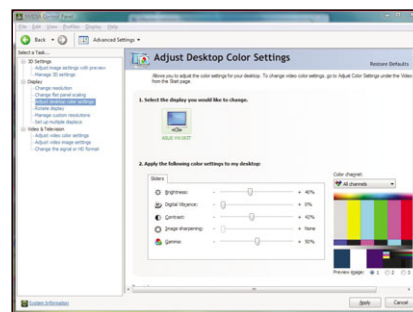
System Configuration

Determine first whether the problem occurs in all windows and all functions, or just certain applications. The difference will tell you whether the problem is located within the realm of hardware and OS (operating system) or is isolated to specific software. If bad colors are limited to a single program, check the settings and users guide provided by the manufacturer or, if nothing else works, try uninstalling and reinstalling the offending application.

If your troubleshooting indicates a broader problem, however, start with Windows' display settings. In Windows XP, right-click a blank spot on the Desktop and select Properties. In the Display Properties dialog box, navigate through the Themes, Appearance, and Settings tab. The Advanced button under the Settings tab offers more specific details on screen resolution and



Most displays include an option to restore factory settings. If yours has such an option, use it.



Video cards often come with custom utilities to manage color and display settings.

Notebook Coloring

When your notebook PC's colors get weird, you have fewer options than with a standalone PC monitor.

1. If the screen has been twisted or the whole machine exposed to liquid or dropping, the screen and its colors can become distorted. You may have to replace the hardware.
2. Notebooks usually don't have on-screen hardware menus, but may have software settings installed with the graphics card drivers. Check your documentation for configuration options.
3. Connect to a standalone monitor and toggle between one display and the other. Determine whether the problem is with the screen itself (this is the case if the other monitor looks OK) or lies within the graphics adapter or OS (if the other display is distorted, too).
4. Take advantage of any service plan or extended warranty. The retailer or manufacturer may be obligated to troubleshoot and resolve the issue for you. ■

color management, in addition to video card-specific configuration options.

In Vista, right-click the Desktop and choose Personalize. You'll find links to adjust the Theme, Windows Color And Appearance, and more. Click Display Settings to adjust the resolution. Click the Advanced Settings button in the Display Settings dialog box to find video card-specific options.

The video card is the source of every signal the monitor receives, so it warrants your attention next. Make sure your graphics drivers are up-to-date. Check Windows Update (windowsupdate.microsoft.com) but don't rely on Microsoft exclusively. Visit your video card manufacturer's Web site for recent driver or firmware updates and install any that are available for your model and OS version. Check your video card's software, as well—it may provide independent color management and configuration options. You may have a separate application available under Programs (My Programs in WinXP), or your card-specific options may be available in Windows' Display Properties as discussed above. ■

BY GREGORY ANDERSON

How To Fix Common Problems With Digital Audio Players

There's a reason DAPs (digital audio players) have become as ubiquitous as cell phones: content. Whether you're downloading music from an online service, availing yourself of the variety of entertaining and informative podcasts that are available, collecting audio books, or ripping your own CDs, you have every reason to consolidate all of that content on your digital audio player.

Unfortunately, using these devices is a bit trickier than it was back in the days of cassettes and CDs. You have to keep the equipment updated, for one thing, and you also have to know the ins and outs of digital audio to get the most out of your player.

First Things First: Update Everything

Most DAPs come with updatable firmware, which is a special memory chip in the player that stores its operating system and other internal software. Firmware updates are often issued to fix bugs, make existing features work better, or even add new features or a new interface to the player. Many times when your player acts up, it is because the firmware is outdated, so keeping it up-to-date is important.

The specific process for updating firmware varies from player to player, and you should get detailed instructions directly from the manufacturer's Web site or the documentation that came with your player so you can follow it to the letter. The upgrade process is so strict because glitches during the update process can sometimes erase or corrupt the player's firmware and prevent the



player from turning back on so you can fix the mistake. This is called “bricking,” because it turns the player into a useless brick that the manufacturer must repair or you must replace entirely.

The chances of bricking your MP3 player during a firmware upgrade—particularly for newer models—are extremely low and shouldn't scare you away from upgrading, but there are several precautions you should take before performing a firmware upgrade.

Back it up. Most digital audio players come with software that lets you synchronize the content stored on them with your computer to create a backup. Before flashing the device, back it up so you can easily restore it in case a glitch in the flashing process requires reformatting the digital audio player's storage. That way, after the device is reformatted, you can restore the backed up content to it.

Plug it in. Connect the digital audio player to its power source before flashing it. Sometimes the flashing process takes a lot of time, and if the battery runs out during the procedure, it can potentially brick the player.

Know the model number and firmware revision. You need to download flash software that is designed for the particular model of digital audio player you have, so check the documentation or look for a sticker on the device that tells you exactly what type of player it is.

Also, check the player itself to see what firmware revision is already installed. Often this is listed in one of the player's menu items, but you may need to use the synchronization software to find it. Write it down and refer to it when looking for an updated version at the manufacturer's Web site. Never flash a player with an earlier firmware revision than the one that is already installed (unless specifically instructed to do so by the manufacturer), as you risk bricking the player.

When in doubt, contact the manufacturer. If you can't find some of the information we just discussed, call or email the manufacturer for assistance. If you still can't find what you need and have any doubts about whether firmware is compatible with your player and is a newer version than what is already installed, then don't flash the player. It's better to have a player that works but has a few problems than to have a brick that doesn't work at all.

Software Updates

Firmware is only one part of the equation. It also is important to keep the software that you use to sync the device with your computer updated. Often you can determine the version that is installed by loading the software, clicking Help, and clicking About. Also check the documentation that came with the software or look through the menus for an update option that automatically checks for, downloads, and installs newer versions of the software.

Troubleshooting Advice

Now that everything's updated, let's take a look at some of the most

common problems that users of digital music players face. We'll look at general tips that can help users of popular DAPs from companies such as Creative, iRiver, Microsoft, Samsung, Sandisk, and Sony. For help solving common problems with Apple DAPs, see "How To Fix Common Problems With iPods & iPhones" in our June issue.

compatible with, which should be listed in the documentation.

Problem: I discovered in the previous step that a music file is not compatible with my digital audio player. Is there any way to make it work?

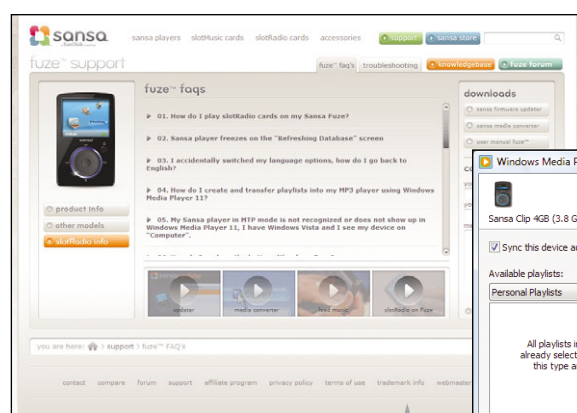
Solution: If you still want to move the incompatible file to your digital music player, conversion is necessary. Some software, such as Windows Media

let you subscribe to or purchase music that plays just fine when you use the software installed on your PC, but the usage license you purchased may not include the ability to transfer the music to a digital audio player. Check your account at the download service's Web site to see what type of playback license you have and look for options (which often cost extra money) to license the songs for playback on your portable digital audio player.

Problem: When I connect my player to the computer, Windows does not recognize it.

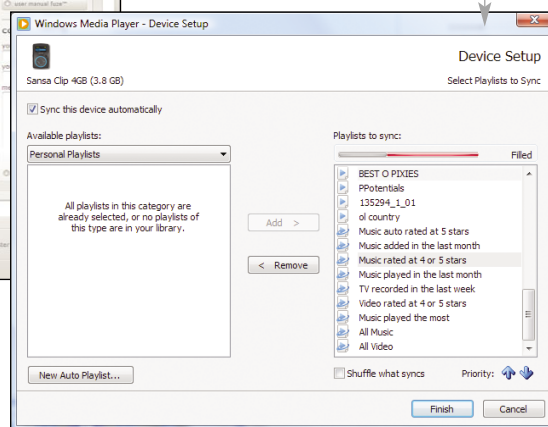
Solution: If the player was previously installed and recognized but then suddenly isn't detected, the easiest thing to do is disconnect it, reboot the computer, and try again.

If that doesn't work, try a different connection cable. Kinked cables sometimes break internally, and connectors can become worn or broken, so a new cable may make a world of



Check to see if a firmware update is available for your digital audio player at the manufacturer's Web site.

Most audio software on your computer (including Windows Media Player) lets you establish automatic synchronization settings so your digital audio player is backed up to the PC.



Problem: A song I downloaded plays fine on my computer but won't play on my digital audio player.

Solution: This happens because of compatibility issues or DRM (Digital Rights Management) protection. Digital music players can only play certain types of files. You can tell what type of file you're dealing with in Windows XP by opening any folder, clicking Tools, clicking Folder Options, clicking the View tab, and removing the check from the Hide Extensions For Known File Types box. In Vista, you can do the same thing by clicking Start, Control Panel, Appearance And Personalization, and Folder Options. Click the View tab and remove the check from the Hide Extensions For Known File Types box. Now examine the three-character extension that is displayed after the period in the problematic file's name and compare it to the types of files the player is

Player 11, converts files automatically if possible whenever they are incompatible with a playback device being synchronized. We recommend using the default conversion options, but you can adjust them manually by clicking the arrow under the Sync tab in Windows Media Player 11, expanding the entry for the device, and clicking Advanced Options. Click the Quality tab and make sure the Convert Music, Pictures, Videos, And TV Shows As Required By This Device box is checked. Click the Select Maximum Quality Level radio button and use the slider to choose Best Quality for conversions that sound as close to the original file as Windows Media Player 11 allows.

Problem: I signed up for a music download service, but songs from it won't load on my player.

Solution: Once again, this is a DRM issue. Some music download services

difference. Most MP3 players connect to a computer via a USB port, so try a different port if one doesn't seem to work and inspect the port on the MP3 player for debris or damage that may be responsible for the broken connection.

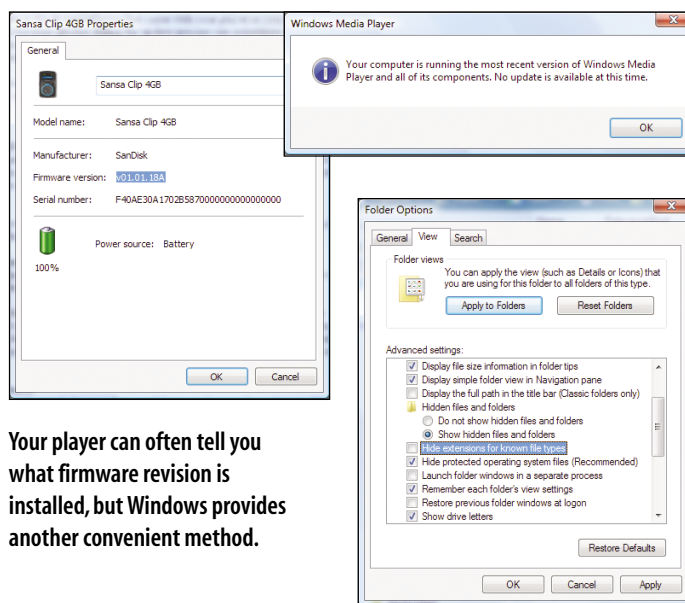
Another thing to consider is software. The drivers that let Windows detect the hardware along with the synchronization software that transfers files between the device and the PC sometimes become outdated or malfunction. You need to remove the software according to the instructions provided by the manufacturer, reboot the computer, and then reinstall the software from scratch, preferably using the latest version of it downloaded from the manufacturer's Web site. Be aware that any settings you established within the software (such as what folders are scanned to find music or what type of file to create when ripping

a CD to your hard drive) will likely disappear when the software is uninstalled, so be sure to adjust them before working with your music again.

Problem: My digital audio player's rechargeable battery doesn't last as long as it used to or doesn't hold a charge at all.

Solution: If you have an older MP3 player, its rechargeable battery could develop a "memory" and refuse to charge beyond a certain level. Try to correct this by draining the battery completely, recharging it as much as possible, draining it completely again, recharging it again, and repeating this process several times until battery performance is improved.

If no improvement is made, or if the battery doesn't charge at all, battery replacement is the only option. Contact the manufacturer to see if the battery is user-replaceable (it generally isn't) and order a new battery if it is. Make sure the battery comes with instructions or that you have instructions in the documentation that came with the device because opening the case is sometimes tricky. Doing so also generally voids your warranty, so be sure to contact the manufac-



Your player can often tell you what firmware revision is installed, but Windows provides another convenient method.

Solution: Audio tracks are recorded at different levels, with high levels producing a relatively loud recording and low levels producing a relatively soft recording. A process called normalization is necessary to make all of the tracks on your digital audio player play at the same overall level.

If your digital music player has an option to automatically normalize tracks, you're in luck. Enable the option and enjoy a level listening volume. If it doesn't, you'll need to use software to normalize the tracks before copying them over to the digital audio player. This is best done with a free program called MP3Gain (mp3gain.sourceforge.net). Click Downloads, click the entry that has "this is what most people will want to download" in the description, choose to save the file, and then double-click the file you just downloaded. Choose Run and then click Next, click Next, and click Install. Click Finish, and the software should load.

Click Add Files if you want to normalize problematic individual tracks or Add Folder to select your entire music folder for normalization. Click Track Analysis, and when that completes, click

Track Gain. Wait for that to finish, listen to the tracks you just normalized, and if they sound too soft, bump the Target "Normal" Volume setting up a few decibels and start the process again. If the tracks are too loud, change the decibel value to a smaller number (increments of 2dB are a safe bet) and try again.

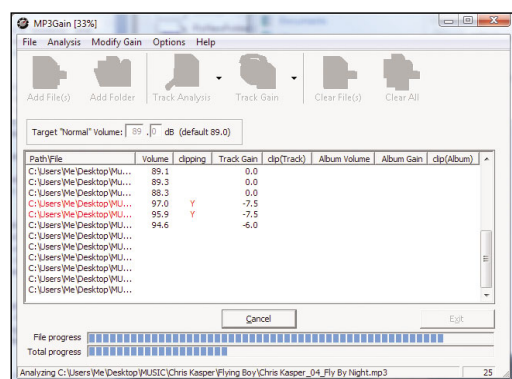
In the future when you rip CDs to your hard drive, be sure to enable normalization in the options of the software you use to convert the tracks. If this option is adjustable, set it to 90% instead of 100% to help avoid ruining the sound of recordings made at low levels when they are converted to a louder level.

Beyond Audio

Many digital audio players are really digital multimedia players, capable of displaying pictures and playing videos, in addition to letting you rock out to your tunes. Most of the advice in this article also applies to other types of multimedia, so be sure to refer to it when you're troubleshooting video or photo issues on your digital audio player. All that's left after that is throwing on a set of headphones and getting lost in a world of entertainment that fits in your pocket. ■

Set your DAP's PC software to check for audio player software updates automatically when possible.

Showing extensions for known file types is a good way to figure out if you are trying to send incompatible audio files to a digital audio player.



Programs like MP3Gain make sure all of your music plays at the same overall volume level.

turer or extended warranty provider for a fix if the player is still under warranty.

Problem: When I play various tracks on my digital audio player, some are very loud and some are very quiet, and I have to fumble for the volume control all of the time.

BY TRACY BAKER

How To Install An FM Transmitter

If you have a digital music library, you likely also own a bevy of portable electronics, such as a digital media player, mobile phone, or GPS device, that can play the music stored on your PC. And although your music player's headphones are great for listening to music while walking or running, wearing headphones won't do (and in some states, is illegal) while you're driving. Alternatively, burning music to a CD can be substantially time-consuming, and portable or built-in speakers are a poor substitute for the speakers in your car. An FM transmitter gives you an easy way to play music from your digital audio player over your car's speakers.

Whether you want to listen to music, podcasts, audio books, or the sound from a movie playing on your media player, FM transmitters allow the entire car to enjoy the audio. Additionally, FM transmitters are portable and easy to install, so you can even take it on a road trip in a friend's vehicle. In this article, we'll examine what you should look for when purchasing an FM transmitter and walk you through the setup of an FM transmitter in your car.

What Is An FM Transmitter?

Typically, an FM transmitter plugs into the headphone jack of your media player (some models use a proprietary connector and are exclusive to certain player brands or models), and it converts the audio output to an FM radio signal that your car's radio can pick up. The FM signal is a low power output that has a range of 10 feet, under ideal conditions. Because radio stations in any given area may already be using many FM frequencies, FM transmitters let you select, either by

choosing a specific frequency or switching among a preset list, an FM channel that's free of interference.

Depending on the prevalence of FM signals in your area, strong FM signals may overpower your FM transmitter, so you'll hear static or other radio stations bleeding over the audio from your media player. If you live in a heavily populated area, the FM transmitter may produce static on nearly every frequency you select. There's a limited signal range because, by U.S. federal law, the FM transmitters can only transmit at full strength up to 10 feet, and after that, the FM signal must begin to die out. For best results, try the 87.7 to 91.9MHz frequencies. They are generally free of radio traffic, because they are reserved for nonprofit radio stations. Check out our "Other Options" sidebar to find out another way to hear audio from your digital media player on your car's speakers.

What Should You Look For?

FM transmitters are available in affordable options that offer only a few presets as well as sophisticated models that let you choose specific frequencies. If you live in a large city where the signal interference may vary, look for an FM transmitter that features a number



of memory presets. The presets let you instantly switch to a channel that you know is free of interference, so you don't need to search for the best channel while driving around town.

If you want to use the FM transmitter with another device, such as your mobile phone or a friend's media player, look for a model that connects via a 3.5mm mini plug. FM transmitters that feature a 3.5mm mini plug connector give you the ability to connect to any device with a headphone jack, including a laptop or portable DVD player.

Other helpful features to look for include an LED screen that can display the current song and a remote control. Most FM transmitters include a power adapter that fits into your car's cigarette lighter, but some can also be powered by AA or AAA batteries. This gives you the freedom to use the FM transmitter in situations where the cigarette lighter

Many FM transmitters, such as the Griffin iTrip Auto (\$59.99; www.griffintechology.com), connect to your car's cigarette lighter for power.





outlet may be in use, such as by a GPS device. Depending on how the FM transmitter connects to your portable music player, the FM transmitter may also be able to charge it.

Devices With A Built-In FM Transmitter

If you're in the market for a media-playing GPS device or mobile phone, you may want to check whether the model you're interested in includes an FM transmitter. For example, with an FM transmitter in a GPS device such as Garmin's Nuvi 755T (\$399.99; www.garmin.com), you can hear instructions from the GPS device over your car's speakers, which are likely much louder than audio from the GPS device's internal speaker. The Nuvi 755T also lets you control the volume of music and navigation prompts, so audio from one won't overpower the other. To set up the Nuvi 755T, you'd select the Volume from the main screen, choose Audio Output, and select FM Transmitter. Once you click OK, select the Auto Tune button and then tune your car's FM radio to the corresponding station.

A number of media-centric mobile phones now also include an FM transmitter. For example, the Sony Ericsson w980 (prices vary by plan; www.sonyericsson.com) features 8GB

of internal memory for music, in addition to its internal FM transmitter. To use the internal transmitter on the w980, you'd simply select Menu, choose Media, and select Music. Start playing a track, click Options, and select FM transmitter. Select a frequency free of FM traffic and tune the mobile phone and car radio to the same frequency and choose Start.

Another option is a hands-free set. Many sets, such as Parrot's MKi9200 (\$299.99; www.parrot.com), feature an FM transmitter to transmit a caller's voice over your car's speakers. Also, some hands-free sets, including

Other Options

Unfortunately, if you live in a crowded city, you may regularly hear static or other audio when using an FM transmitter. If an FM transmitter isn't ideal, you may want to invest in a car stereo that features a built-in USB port that will allow you to connect your digital audio player directly to the car's stereo. For example, Pioneer's DEH-P6000UB (\$250; www.pioneer-electronics.com) can play files in the MP3, WMA (Windows Media Audio), and AAC (Advanced Audio Coding) format. An optional Bluetooth adapter lets you play your phone's audio or a phone call through the car's speakers. ■

the MKi9200, let you connect a 3.5mm mini-plug to supply music from a digital media player. The MKi9200 also displays a full color playlist with the name of the artist, title of the album, and, if available, the album's cover art.

Installing An FM Transmitter

The setup process is generally the same for every FM transmitter. Begin by connecting your digital media player to the transmitter. In some cases, you may need to use a special cable, but usually, you'll just connect the included cable to the player's headphone jack. Next, plug the FM transmitter into a power source, which is typically going to be your car's cigarette lighter or a 12V socket.

Next, turn on the FM transmitter. Some models will perform a quick station scan to find interference, while others allow you to select the FM station you think is best. With a model that performs a scan, let it find the best available channel and then change the car's FM radio to that station. If the FM transmitter lets you select a given channel, turn up the volume on your FM radio and search the dial until you find a free station. Then, set the FM transmitter to the same frequency.

Start playing music on your digital media player. If there's static in the reception, try a different preset or another frequency. You may need to guess and check until you find the perfect frequency. Once you find a channel that's free of interference, save the frequency as a preset on the FM transmitter, assuming your model offers the preset feature. Note that as you drive around, you may need to switch frequencies.

Media Library To Go

With your digital media collection at your fingertips, you'll be in complete control of the music in your car and no longer be subjected to the limitations of AM/FM radio or your CD collection. ■

BY NATHAN LAKE

Pest Control

Remove Stubborn Bugs

Zlob

Description. Zlob goes by several names, including Zlob.Downloader and other iterations. Zlob is a Trojan horse that finds its way onto your PC by pretending to be something it's not. While Zlob does no damage itself, it downloads and installs other malware without your knowledge.

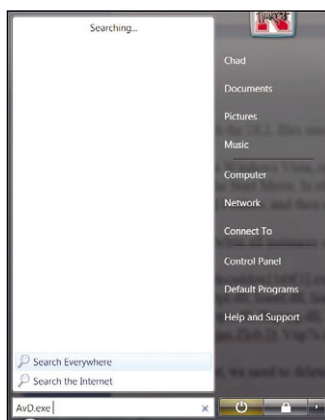
How to tell if Zlob is on your PC. Symptoms of the Zlob Trojan include a sluggish system and numerous pop-ups that prompt you to download malicious software. The easiest way to tell if your PC is infected is to see if any Zlob processes are running. Press CTRL-SHIFT-ESC to open the Windows Task Manager. Click the Processes tab and click Image Name to sort processes by name. If Nvctrl.exe or Msmsgs.exe are listed, you're likely infected with Zlob.

How to manually get rid of Zlob. Start by closing all instances of the program that are running in memory.

1. In the Windows Task Manager, select Nvctrl.exe and click the End Process button. Repeat for Msmsgs.exe.
2. Close the Task Manager window and open it again to make sure neither process has restarted.

Next you should unregister Zlob-related DLL files and delete related Zlob files.

1. Click Run in the Start menu (in Vista, press WIN [the Windows logo key]-R) and type `cmd` and press ENTER to open the command prompt.
2. You'll need to search for each of the DLL files listed below. In Vista, open the Start menu and type each file name below in the Start Search field at the bottom of the Start menu. In Windows XP, click Search in the



No need to jump through complicated searches if you're using Vista. Simply enter relevant search terms in the Start menu.

Start menu and then click All Files And Folders. In the search field, type each file name. Write down the path to each file if found.

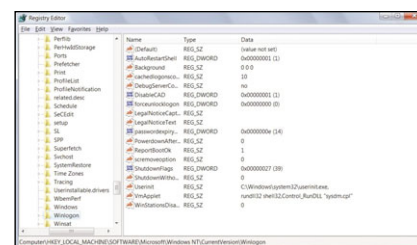
Bpvoll.dll, Czxytx.dll, Dxovx.dll, Hymww.dll, Iesplg.dll, Iesbpl.dll, Isadd.dll, Lcsrsrv.dll, Oyopu.dll, Pkgvyg.dll, Qzviz.dll, Splug.dll, Vzfhprk.dll, Ygjun.dll, Yuspej.dll, and Yronl.dll

3. Type `regsvr32 /u`, followed by the path and filename discovered in step 3 above. So your entry might look like this: `regsvr32 /u C:\Windows\System32\Bpvoll.dll`.
4. Open Search again and search for and delete all instances of the files below.
Codeaddon1169[1].exe,
Czxytx.dll, Dumpserv.com,
Dxovx.dll, Hymww.dll,
hp[X].tmp, Iesplg.dll, Iesbpl.dll,
Isadd.dll, Isamnt.exe, Lcsrsrv.dll,
Msvol.tlb, Msmsgs.exe,
Ncompat.tlb, Nvctrl.exe,
Oyopu.dll, Pkgvyg.dll,
Pmmnt.exe, Pmsnrr.exe, Protect,
Qzviz.dll, RSA, Splug.dll,

Trojan.Zlob, Trojan.Zlob.D,
Vnp7s.net, Vzfhprk.dll, Ygjun.dll,
Yuspej.dll, Yronl.dll, and
Zxserv0.com

Next, we need to delete certain Registry keys installed by Zlob.

1. Open the Run dialog box (in WinXP, click Run in the Start menu; in Vista, press WIN-R). Type `regedit` in the dialog box and press ENTER to open the Registry Editor. To back up your Registry, right-click My Computer (Computer in Vista) in the Registry Editor and click Export. Set the Export Range to All, choose a name and location to save the file, and click Save.
2. In the left side of the Registry Editor, navigate to HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE/SOFTWARE/MICROSOFT/WINDOWS NT/CURRENTVERSION/WINLOGON



The Registry Editor is a powerful tool and one you should use carefully. Deleting the wrong key can cause system problems.

3. In the right side of the Registry Editor, delete `Shell=explorer.exe` and `Shell=explorer.exe,msmsgs.exe`.
4. Navigate to HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE/SOFTWARE/MICROSOFT/WINDOWS/CURRENTVERSION and delete `RunRegSvr32=%System%\msmsgs.exe`.

Ezula

Description. Ezula is an Internet Explorer add-on that links Web site text to personalized ads. Some reports indicate that Ezula entices users to install it by allowing them to conduct quick searches based on Web site text. Other reports indicate that Ezula may install itself without your knowledge when you install other applications (such as Kazaa). Alternative names include HotText, Top-Text, and iLookup.

How to tell if Ezula is on your PC. If you notice random words underlined in yellow with green edges every time you visit Web sites in Internet Explorer, there is a good chance Ezula is installed on your system. In many instances, you'll find Ezula listed in Add/Remove Programs (although, as you'll see, completely removing Ezula isn't as easy as it might appear).

How to get rid of Ezula using the Symantec removal tool. Symantec has an Ezula removal tool that's worth trying. You can find the tool at tinyurl.com/ycv94n. Follow the instructions found there, but also note that this information was first posted in early 2007. If you have problems with the removal tool, try the manual method listed below.

How to manually get rid of Ezula. We'll start with the easy stuff, uninstalling Ezula using Add Or Remove Programs.

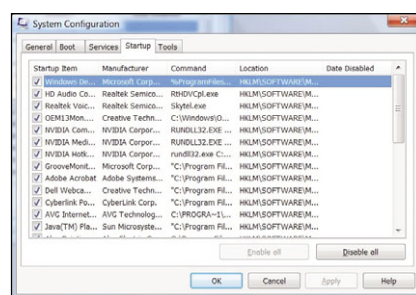
1. Open the Control Panel and click Add Or Remove Programs in Classic view in WinXP. (If you're using Vista, open the Control Panel and click Uninstall A Program under Programs.)
2. If Ezula is listed here, select it and click the Remove button. (In Vista, select the program and click the Uninstall/Change button.)
3. If you don't find Ezula in Add Or Remove Programs, check your Program Files directory (usually C:\PROGRAM FILES) for an Ezula folder and double-click the Unwise.exe file inside.

Unfortunately, the uninstaller can't be completely trusted, so you should make sure all traces of Ezula are removed. Start by making sure no processes are running after you uninstall Ezula.

1. Open the Windows Task Manager (press CTRL-SHIFT-ESC).
2. Kill any processes with the following names by selecting the process and clicking the End Process button.
Antispy.exe, Apev.exe, Ezulastb.exe, Ezinstall.exe, Ezinstall[1].exe, Ezpopstub.exe, Ezstub.exe, EzStub[1].exe, Help Anti.exe, Iconz.exe, Link 01 Live.exe, Mmod.exe, Mmttil.exe, Mydailyhoroscope.exe, Preinsln.exe, Se.exe, Sed.exe, Ss.exe, Unwise.exe, Wo.exe.

Next, we need to delete certain files the uninstaller may have left behind.

1. Click Search in the Start menu and then click All Files And Folders. In the search field, type **Ezinstall.exe** and click Search. (In Vista, simply type the file name in the Start Search field at the bottom of the Start menu.) Delete any results and repeat for the following files:
Ezinstall[1].exe, Ezulastb.exe, Ezstub.cab, Ezstub.exe, EzStub[1].exe, Ezstub.inf, Ezula.cnr, Genun.ez, Iconz.exe, and Mmod.exe.
2. Click Run in the Start menu (in Vista, press WIN-R). Type **msconfig** in the dialog box.



Msconfig allows you to disable certain items that are set to load at startup. You may need to disable certain items if you want to make sure Ezula doesn't come back.

3. Click the Startup tab and remove the check next to any of the following filenames:
Antispy.exe, Apev.exe, Ezpopstub.exe, Help Anti.exe, Mmod.exe, Iconz.exe, Link 01 Live.exe, Mmttil.exe, Mydailyhoroscope.exe, Preinsln.exe, Se.exe, Sed.exe, Ss.exe, Unwise.exe, Wo.exe
4. After rebooting your system, open Windows Search again. Search for folders named My Daily Horoscope, Sed, Third Close Jugs, or Web Offer. Delete any of these folders you find.

Now we can unregister and delete associated DLL files.

1. Search for each file listed below and note the directory (path) in which they're found.
Araamon.dll, Aud.dll, Book.dll, Chpon.dll, Coreak.dll, Eapbh.dll, Sepng.dll, Ss.dll, Sysfile.dll, Thin.dll, Updak.dll
2. Click Run in the Start menu (Vista users, press WIN-R) and type **cmd** to open the command prompt. Type **regsvr32 /u** followed by the directory and file name noted above. Repeat the regsvr32 /u command with each of the DLL files you found before.
3. After you've unregistered each of the files above, be sure to search for and delete the relevant DLL file. When finished, reboot the system.

Finally, delete the Registry entries. Make a backup of your Registry before proceeding.

1. In Vista, press WIN-R (in WinXP, click Run in the Start menu) and type **regedit** to open the Registry Editor. Registry keys are listed in a nested view on the left, while specific values within a key are listed on the right of the window. Click Edit and Find and then enter **ezula** in the Find What field. Click Find Next and delete any entries that include Ezula. ■

BY CHAD DENTON

Q&A / Computing Chat Rooms

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Ask a question, share your computing knowledge, or search our archive of thousands of questions and answers.

-
- Smart Computing? Chat
- Frequently Asked Questions
- # Chat Room 1
- 10:00:00 AM: jesse is welcome
 10:00:00 AM: JesseCanakes: Have you checked any of the information Diet has online about their models?
 10:00:00 AM: kristenmiller has entered the room.
 10:00:00 AM: JesseCanakes has left the room.
 10:00:00 AM: kristenmiller has left the room.
 10:00:00 AM: jessamccary has left the room.
 10:00:00 AM: kristenmiller has entered the room.
 10:00:00 AM: kristenmiller has left the room.
 10:00:00 AM: kristenmiller: Do we have any digital imaging experts in here? What kind of D-SLR do you recommend?
 10:00:00 AM: jessamccary has entered the room.
 10:00:00 AM: JesseCanakes has entered the room.
- Chat Users
 1:01:00 PM
 JesseCanakes
 kristenmiller
 jessamccary
 1:01:00 PM
 kristenmiller is online
- http://www.cba.hawaii.edu/~jessedc/... Search Home Stop Reload
- Go Back
 Go Forward
 Home
 Stop
 Reload

- 1 To change the way messages display, the screen refresh rate, and the font size, click the Chat Preferences link. Select your preferences and click Save.

In the conversation by entering a comment in the Type Comment box and clicking the Send/Refresh button.

chatting, click Exit Room.



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TypingWeb

Learn to type or just brush up on your typing skills with this online tutor. You'll find Beginner, Intermediate, and Advanced lessons that each guide you through a series of typing exercises. The exercises are designed to improve speed and accuracy.

www.typingweb.com

FAST FIXES

COMPILED BY JIM PASCOE

Internet Explorer 8 Compatibility View List Update

Update: The new IE8 Compatibility View list attempts to make sites designed for older browsers look more like they were intended to look.

Installation: To install this update, go to www.microsoft.com/download and type **KB971180** in the Search field. Press ENTER and, from the resulting list, click the link for your operating system (Update For Internet Explorer 8 Compatibility View List For Windows XP [KB971180], Update For Internet Explorer 8 Compatibility View List For Windows Vista [KB971180], etc.). On the following page, click the Download button. Once the file has been downloaded, double-click it to begin the installation and follow the on-screen directions to install the file. Restart your computer when it is complete.

www.microsoft.com

Adobe Flash CS4 Professional Update 10.0.2

Update: This update improves the overall stability of Flash CS4. It addresses issues regarding the handling and compiling of big projects, including unstable behavior during timeline scrubbing, performance issues when opening big files, and crashes when trying to create a text field on stage.

Installation: To obtain the update, go to www.adobe.com/downloads/updates and select Flash from the drop-down menu in the gray Find Product Updates box. Click Go and look for the Adobe Flash CS4 Professional Update (10.0.2) on the following page. Click Download The Windows Update and save the EXE file to your hard drive. Once the file is downloaded, double-click it and follow the on-screen directions.

www.adobe.com

Apple QuickTime Update 7.6.2

Update: Update 7.6.2 makes Apple QuickTime more secure. It provides extra validation that keeps maliciously crafted files from causing software crashes or unwanted code execution.

Installation: To update QuickTime on your machine, go to www.apple.com/quicktime and click the blue Free Download button. On the following page, choose whether you want to also download a version of iTunes; also select whether you want to sign up for email newsletters. An email address is not necessary if you don't want to sign up for the newsletters. Finally, click the blue Free Download Now button. Save and double-click to run QuickTimeInstaller.exe.

www.apple.com

Nero Update 9.4.13.2

Update: Nero 9.4.13.2 fixes bugs in the Nero suite and adds new features, including PowerPoint to DVD-video for TV playback.

Installation: To update Nero, go to www.nero.com and, from the Support menu, select Nero 9. On this page, click the Download Now button below Nero 9 Update, which takes you to the update page. Click the square Download button, and you will see a message about the Microsoft .NET Framework 3.0 requirement for Nero to run on WinXP. If you are running WinXP and don't have this framework installed, click the link to download and install from Microsoft. Otherwise, click the gray Download Nero 9 button and save Nero-91.4.13.2_update.exe to your hard drive. Double-click the downloaded file to start the installation. Be sure to have your Nero 9 serial number during the installation.

www.nero.com

Security Update For Microsoft PowerPoint 2002

Update: This update fixes a security hole in PowerPoint 2002 that could let random code run when a user opens a maliciously modified presentation.

Installation: Go to www.microsoft.com/download and type **KB957781** in the search field. Press ENTER and, from the list, click Security Update For Microsoft PowerPoint 2002 (KB957781). On the following page, scroll down below the blue box to the Instructions section. Click either the link to the Microsoft Update site or the link to the Office Update site to verify you have the necessary service packs installed for the update to work. If you feel confident your system is up-to-date and want to update PowerPoint manually, go up to the blue box and click the Download button. Follow the instructions and restart when finished.

www.microsoft.com

FIX OF THE MONTH

iTunes Update 8.2

Update: This update adds support for the new iPhone 3.0 software.

Installation: To upgrade the Windows version of iTunes, go to www.apple.com/itunes. Click the bright blue Download iTunes button, and on the next page, in the left column below Download iTunes 8.2 Now, make sure it reads Windows XP Or Vista (the browser should auto-detect your operating system). If not, scroll to the bottom of that column and click the blue Get iTunes For Windows link. Click the Download Now button. Quit iTunes and run the downloaded file. Follow on-screen instructions to install.

www.apple.com

Frequently Asked Questions

Answers to users' most common questions about **Powerline Networks**

Most powerline networks feature a range of around 1,000 feet, but the signal can't pass beyond an electrical transformer, so it won't jump onto the public power grid.

FAQ How do powerline networks work?

Powerline networks use your home's power lines to transfer data. For example, a typical powerline network router sends your data to an adapter at your wall outlet, which relays the data to another adapter (that is plugged into a power outlet in another room). That adapter uses an Ethernet cable to send the data to your PC.

FAQ Are powerline networks hard to set up and install?

Compared to a wireless network, it's relatively easy to create a powerline network. With a starter kit, you'll get two powerline adapters—one that you'll connect to a wall outlet near your router and one to a wall outlet near another PC. Then, you'll connect the router and PC to the adapters via Ethernet cables. You won't need to enter any complex settings or search for the wireless signal.

FAQ My powerline network doesn't work when I connect it to a surge protector or power conditioner. Why must I directly connect the adapter to the wall outlet?

The surge protector sees the data sent over the powerline adapters as excess power that it needs to block. As such, your powerline network will perform either poorly or not at all, depending on your surge protector, when you attempt to plug the powerline adapter into the surge protector.

FAQ If powerline networks just use existing electrical wiring, does that mean that my neighbors may be able to access my home network and files?

Most powerline networks feature a range of around 1,000 feet, but the signal can't pass beyond an electrical transformer, so it won't jump onto the public power grid. If

your neighbors' electricity runs on the same electrical system, however, it's possible the signal may reach them. Thus, nearly all manufacturers of powerline equipment integrate heavy-duty AES (Advanced Encryption Standard) technology to encrypt the signal so that only the powerline adapters you register may receive the broadband access. (Often, you can also specify which hardware can access the signal.)

FAQ How fast are powerline networks?

Many recent powerline adapters support a theoretical throughput of 200Mbps (megabits per second), while most other network adapters support up to 85Mbps of theoretical throughput. In real-world use, 200Mbps powerline networking equipment delivers around 100 to 150Mbps, while adapters rated at 85Mbps produce around 50 to 60Mbps. By comparison, 802.11n Wi-Fi equipment offers a theoretical throughput of 300Mbps, but most only deliver around 50 to 100Mbps in real-world results. As an added bonus, powerline networks don't suffer from nearly as many interference issues as wireless networks, so the signal will be more reliable. For example, you don't need to worry about obstructions from your walls or interference from other wireless electronics, such as a landline phone.

FAQ Why are some powerline adapters listed with the "HD" (high-definition) moniker?

With the ability to stream content at real-world speeds of 100Mbps, newer powerline networking adapters are fast enough to stream HD video. HD's improved video and audio quality requires much more data than standard-definition video, and slower powerline and wireless networks have trouble carrying all the information. ■

Q & A

Need help with your hardware or software? Looking for simple explanations on technical subjects? Send us your questions!

Get straight answers to your technical questions from *Smart Computing*. Send your questions, along with a phone and/or fax number, so we can call you if necessary, to: *Smart Computing* Q&A, P.O. Box 85380, Lincoln, NE 68501, or email us at q&a@smartcomputing.com. Please include all version numbers for the software about which you're inquiring, operating system information, and any relevant information about your system. (Volume prohibits individual replies.)



Hardware

Q My PC power cord is connected to a surge arrestor. When I boot up each day, I must first turn on the surge arrestor, which instantly provides power to the PC. Just as quickly, the PC stops winding up, and power to the PC is shut off. This is because I have not turned on the PC power at its On/Off button. Immediately after the PC power is shut down, I press the PC Power button, and it begins to power up again. Am I harming anything in the PC with this rapid on-off-on sequence? If yes, what should I do differently?

A Although we don't have any laboratory data to refer to, our hunch is that this might not be the best practice for your computer. Each time you power up your computer, even for just a moment, your power supply is being put under strain as it converts alternating current into the various voltages of direct current required by your computer's components.

Under normal conditions, there's no need to turn off your surge arrestor. Shutting down Windows through the operating system should be your standard procedure unless there are thunderstorms that might cause lightning in your area. In this case, we

would recommend shutting down your computer as described and then taking the additional precaution of unplugging the computer (and monitor) from the surge arrestor.

If you want to conserve electricity, we recommend using either Hibernate or Standby in WinXP or Sleep in Vista. When your PC enters Standby mode, all of the data used by your current applications is stored in memory, but most of the components in your computer are shut down. When you come out of Standby, Windows retrieves this data very quickly from memory, minimizing your wait.

Hibernation works in a similar fashion, except your data (known as your system state) is preserved on your hard drive, and your entire computer is powered down. This saves a bit more energy than Standby but takes more time to "awaken." Sleep in Vista is a combination of Standby and Hibernate. The Sleep mode puts your computer in a low power state and saves the system state to memory and hard drive.

Not all computers support these modes, but if yours does, you can configure it by opening the Control Panel and clicking Power Options Properties in Classic view. ■



Online

Q I find it very frustrating that whenever I call for the email client, Outlook or Outlook Express appears. How can I make Gmail the default whenever there is a call for email?

A Although Gmail often behaves like an email client when used in a browser, it isn't really an email client so much as an email service. From what you describe, you normally access Gmail through a Web browser, and when you click on an email link, Windows

tries to launch Outlook or Outlook Express. Fortunately, there are several easy solutions to your dilemma.

If you're content with using a browser for Gmail, you can download Gmail Notifier (tinyurl.com/2egw2q), a free application from Google that adds a plethora of functionality to your use of Gmail. Once installed, the Notifier sits in your System Tray. It will check your Gmail account for new messages, alert you when they come in, and display a short synopsis of each message. Best of all, it sets itself

as your default email client, so that when you click an email link, it opens Gmail in your browser of choice. The only downsides to

using the Gmail Notifier are that it's not supported on Windows Vista, and you can't use it in conjunction with the Google Toolbar. ■



Hardware

Q My 5-year-old motherboard, Asus A7V600, has SATA, but it may be a dated version of SATA. The existing SATA drives are filling up, and I need more space. Newer SATA drives are version 3 and are rated much faster. Will those newer type 3 drives work with my old system?

A SATA (Serial Advanced Technology Attachment) drive technology comes in three main flavors. The first is SATA 150. This drive interface can transfer data at a rate of up to 150MBps (megabytes per second), though most drives will have trouble sending data across the interface at that rate. The second flavor is SATA 3Gbps, which has a transfer capacity of 3Gbps (gigabits per second). SATA 3Gbps also adds some clever technology that helps queue and prioritize data transfers. The final SATA flavor is SATA 6Gbps,

which has a transfer capacity of 6Gbps (gigabits per second).

It looks like your Asus motherboard supports SATA 150 with two SATA ports. Each SATA flavor is backward-compatible, though a hard drive with a SATA 6Gbps interface can only transfer data as fast as the motherboard's connection. If you do use a faster SATA drive, you may have to use a jumper on the drive to throttle it down to the 150Mbps transfer rate.

If you eventually purchase a drive or plan on grouping a set of drives as a RAID (redundant array of independent disks) that will benefit from the faster transfer rates of the SATA 3Gbps interface, you can purchase an add-on card that will fit in your PCI (Peripheral Component Interconnect) slot. These types of cards provide additional SATA ports and typically cost around \$20 for a four-port card. ■



Applications

Q I inserted page numbers in a Word document, and now I want to delete them. How can I delete these page numbers?

A If it's a Word 2003 document, open it in Word, select View, and click Header And Footer. Click Switch Between Header And Footer on the Header And Footer toolbar, if necessary. Next, select one of the page numbers in your document by double-clicking it

until you see the frame around the number. Once you've selected it, press DELETE on your keyboard.

In Word 2007, click the View tab and choose Print Layout. If you can't see the page numbers in Print Layout, double-click the horizontal line that divides pages to display the white space between pages. Then just select the page number and press the DELETE key. ■



Security

Q My computer was infected with a virus. I have been able to remove two viruses with the help of my antivirus program. But I'm having problems when I try to use Firefox to access the Internet. After clicking Firefox, it says: This application has failed to start because xpcom.dll was not found. Reinstalling the application may fix the problem.

A It looks like your antivirus program might have been a little too aggressive in cleaning up what it suspected was a virus. Fortunately, reinstalling Firefox should replace the missing DLL file. Be sure to download the latest release of Firefox at www.mozilla.com. ■

Are you having trouble finding a product or getting adequate service from a manufacturer? If so, we want to help solve your problem. Send us a description of the product you're seeking or the problem you're having with customer service. In billing disputes, include relevant information (such as account numbers or screen names for online services) and photocopies of checks. Include your phone number in case we need to contact you.

Letters may be edited for length and clarity; volume prohibits individual replies.



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Taking On Wireless Problems

On Dec. 8, 2008, I purchased a Dell Inspiron 1525 with an 802.11n Wi-Fi card. For the first two to three months, the Wi-Fi card had good speed and signal strength, but I only used the laptop about three feet from my 802.11n router. When I tried to use the Dell Inspiron in another room or at Wi-Fi hotspots, I could not get any signal. My wife has a Dell Inspiron E1505 with an 802.11g Wi-Fi card, and it works fine at both home and Wi-Fi hotspots. I've contacted Dell Support on April 7, 16, 20, 21, 22, and 29. Thus far, two tech support agents have come to replace parts in the laptop, including the 802.11n Wi-Fi card and the laptop's motherboard. All I want is the current 1525 replaced with one that works properly.

Jim
Panama City, Fla.

We contacted a few Dell public relations representatives in early May, and at the time, Dell had asked Jim to send the laptop in for repair. When Jim got the laptop back at the end of May, the wireless card exhibited the same problems as before, and at that point, we told Dell's PR team that Jim deserved a new Dell Inspiron 1525. Jim submitted his unit for an exchange, and rather than sending him a replacement using a refurbished or used laptop, Dell was building a completely new laptop for Jim. Additionally, Dell assigned a member of its Social Media group to make certain that everything worked out properly when Jim received his newly built laptop.

Around the middle of March, one of the desktop computers that's connected to my Linksys

wireless network stopped communicating with my Linksys router. I contacted Linksys tech support and could not re-establish communication through my Linksys wireless adapter. Linksys told me that I needed a new wireless adapter and that I would receive a \$15 rebate coupon, because I had paid \$39.99 for six months of tech support, to help pay for the new adapter. They also told me I needed to remove all my wireless adapter drivers so I could successfully install the new wireless adapter and that they'd send me a driver uninstaller application. After receiving the driver uninstaller and purchasing the new adapter, the computer would still not communicate with the router. Linksys tech support informed me that I should switch from WPA (Wi-Fi Protected Access) security to WEP (Wired Equivalent Privacy). When I argued that WEP is not as secure as WPA, the tech said that WEP is very secure and told me that I would have to pay \$29.95 to get my adapter working with WPA—even though I purchased six months of tech support. Why was I told that my \$39.99 would cover my network, and where is the \$15 rebate Linksys promised me?

James
Detroit, Mich.

On May 1, we reached out to a few public relations contacts at Linksys and informed them of the issues James had with both Linksys' equipment and tech support. A few days later, James received a phone call from a more helpful Linksys support specialist, who quickly determined that James needed a new router, rather than a new wireless adapter or a different security protocol. ■

A Dark & Stormy Night

Our Internet connection had been slow for a long time. I knew it, our houseguests knew it, and our Xbox trying to stream Netflix certainly knew it. With a lot going on this summer, I just hadn't had time to dredge up these problems. My general theories, though, included configuration problems, a hardware malfunction, or just a need for faster DSL (digital subscriber line) connectivity. One rainy night, I sat down to figure it all out. As fate would have it, we were suffering from a perfect storm of all three. When your connection starts slipping away for no apparent reason, our path may guide you through the storm, as well.

At first, I suspected the poor-quality wireless signals bouncing around our 80-year-old house. But even a wired connection—Ethernet direct to the modem through to the DSL line—crawled. My favorite online speed test (www.speakeasy.net/speedtest) confirmed that we were getting 280Kbps (kilobits per second) instead of the 1.5Mbps (megabits per second) we had subscribed for. I also learned that using a router behind the modem, as I do, requires the modem to be in “bridge” mode for maximum throughput. Excited about a simple fix, I dug up my old notes on logging directly in to the modem's admin console. If you don't have that information, try looking up your model's default settings online or calling your ISP's (Internet service provider's) tech support line. Though I wasn't configured for bridge mode (model-specific instructions vary for this, as well), I soon discovered that the connection itself was the culprit. The status screen told me that my connection from the wall came in at only 330Kbps. No matter what configuration changes I made or how creative I got improving signal strength, I was never going to get much speed.

There was only one thing to do—reach out to Verizon's tech support. I dialed the 24/7 help line, dreading a painful wait and a long series of obvious questions: Yes, I have filters installed; no, I'm not using a line splitter. I was mildly surprised to reach a friendly technician right away. After just a few questions, I convinced him to cut right to a “line test.” Basically, your ISP can test the connection from their end and

tell whether the problem is inside or outside. We tried a few other steps (resetting the modem to factory defaults, moving it away from possible electrical interference, switching cables) before deciding that the problem was somewhere between our outside drop and the modem. They scheduled someone to come out and assess where the signal was falling off. The next day, a friendly and capable technician hooked his diagnostic modem to the line, got a 1.5Mbps connection, and deter-

mined that the line itself was capable of speeds above 3Mbps. Only one possibility remained. After five years of heavy use, our modem was sunk. Now I had a choice—buy a new (supported) model from Verizon and wait for it to ship or run to Best Buy and pay a little more to get one right away. For once, I exercised patience and ordered from Verizon.

On the phone ordering the modem, I asked the sales department to review my DSL plan, as well. It turns out I was eligible for a free upgrade, from 1.5Mbps to 3Mbps.

Also, by dropping our seldom-used voice line and converting to a data-only “dry loop,” I could save \$50 a month. Twice the stuff I use, less of the stuff I don't, and for half the price? Sign me up. After a couple shipping miscues, during which time I found myself wishing I'd just gone to Best Buy, our new modem arrived. Setting it up was the easy part. I connected the phone line, launched the admin tool, configured the new modem for bridge mode (Google for instructions on your model and ISP), and plugged our wireless router into one of the modem's ports. At last, we were online again and faster than ever. Hardware changes won't save all sinking ships, but it's worth one of those rainy night calls if your modem's getting old and your connection's fading. ■

BY GREGORY ANDERSON

Gregory Anderson is a regular contributor to Smart Computing and several other technology publications. He keeps a sharp eye (with the help of thick glasses) on computing trends and enjoys working with geeks of all stripes—most of the time. Reach Greg with your stormy connection sagas at gregory-anderson@smartcomputing.com.





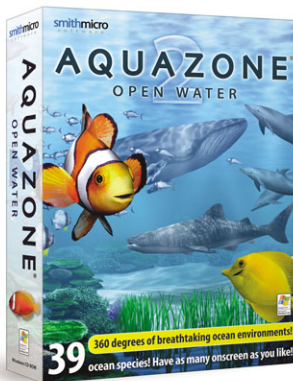
2GB Vault OTG Secure Encrypted Flash Drive

\$49.00 | CMS Products
www.cmsproducts.com

Securing on-the-go data is of the utmost concern for anyone transferring sensitive information to a USB drive. CMS Products took this into consideration when constructing the Vault OTG Encrypted Flash Drive. Immediately after you plug the drive into your PC's USB port, the pre-encryption window appears and asks for a pass phrase.

As soon as you remove the drive from any PC, it automatically locks to prevent unwanted tampering. Protected by a three-year warranty, the Vault OTG supports Windows 2000/XP/Vista and leaves no trace of activity after it's unplugged.

by Joanna Safford

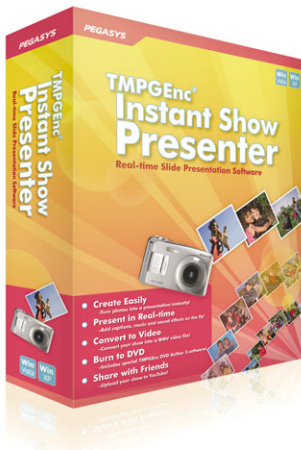


Aquazone 2

\$24.99 | Smith Micro Software | www.smithmicro.com

I've always been a fan of Smith Micro's Aquazone virtual aquarium/screen savers, which include many of the fish I had as a kid. Aquazone 2: Open Water jumps the tank and heads for, well, open water. My fish tank favorites are still there, as lifelike as ever, but they're now joined by sharks, whales, and other open-water denizens. I like being able to turn 360 degrees and zoom so I can follow a particular fish that would otherwise swim out of view.

by Joshua Gulick



TMPGEnc Instant Show Presenter

\$49.95 | Pegasys | tmpgenc.pegasys-inc.com

Don't let the dense product name throw you—this is a super-friendly application for turning your photos into musical slideshows. It can't incorporate your home movie clips, but its Instant Show Wizard can automatically create fun still-image presentations in your choice of theme at up to 1080p resolution.

Instant Show Presenter for 32-bit Windows XP/Vista provides you with the slideshow tools you need, and then some. You'll get photo cropping, transitions, pan/zoom effects, captions, sound effects, and more. And you'll appreciate its zoomable, scrollable, tabletop-style photo gallery. Output options include YouTube, DVD, and WMV (Windows Media Video) files.

by Marty Sems

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